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Sprague, William Buell,  
Lectures illustrating the  
contrast between true







# LECTURES

ILLUSTRATING THE CONTRAST

BETWEEN

# TRUE CHRISTIANITY

AND

# VARIOUS OTHER SYSTEMS.

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## PREFACE.

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If Christianity be what it claims to be—the only religion that supplies an antidote to human guilt, or restores the purity of human nature, it becomes a matter of infinite moment to every individual to understand the grounds on which it rests and the truths which it reveals. And as error is dangerous in proportion as truth is valuable, it is no less important that we distinguish accurately between the one and the other; that we do not recognise as the legitimate offspring of Heaven, systems which have had their origin in the blindness of human Reason, or the seductive influence of human depravity. The following Lectures are designed to secure this double object; to bring out True Christianity in its glorious attractions, and especially to exalt it by a comparison with other systems which have stood

forth against it in the attitude of opposition or rivalry, and to erect a barrier against the reception of those other systems, by exhibiting them as miserably defective on the one hand, and grossly erroneous on the other.

It has been found impossible, in the prosecution of this plan, wholly to avoid repetition; nor has it been thought desirable even to attempt it. As the same general views of Christianity stand opposed to various forms of error, these views have necessarily been introduced in different discourses with such modifications as the nature of the subject seemed to demand. The design has been, so far as was consistent with the prescribed limits of the work, to render the discussion of each topick complete in itself.

It was the intention of the author originally to have referred to particular authorities for the various facts which are introduced in several of these Lectures; and he has been deterred from doing so only by having found that they are so much the common property of almost all the writers by whom these subjects have been treated, that, so far as he knew, they might with as good reason be credited to one as to another. In the Lecture on Mohamedism there will be found some coincidence with the general train of thought in White's Bampton



Lectures ; but, while the author refers to that work as authority for some of the particular facts which he has presented, it is due to himself to state that the whole outline of the Lecture in its present form had been prepared before the book fell into his hands. In the Lecture on Romanism he has availed himself more particularly of one or two small, but invaluable, works by the Rev. Thomas Hartwell Horne, whose researches in various departments of Biblical learning and Ecclesiastical History, have laid the church under deep and perpetual obligation. In the Lecture on Antinomianism he was not a little embarrassed from the Protean character of that heresy, or rather from the different degrees in which it is found to exist ; but he became convinced upon reflection, that the only form in which it could be successfully encountered was that of a distinct and fully developed system. Those who will look into Andrew Fuller's writings on this subject will perceive that this was the form in which it existed in England in his time ; and the author has been assured by several gentlemen of great intelligence who have been conversant with it both in Great Britain and in our own country, that the views which are here presented are fully justified by the results of their personal observation.

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These Lectures were originally delivered in the hearing of the congregation with which the author is more immediately connected; and they are now given to the world in the hope that, by the blessing of God, they may form some humble defence against the seductions of error, while they serve to illustrate the claims, and extend the influence, of genuine Christianity.

*Albany, April 12th, 1837.*



# LECTURE I.

## CHRISTIANITY CONTRASTED WITH ATHEISM.

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ROMANS I. 16.

*I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ.*

IN CONNEXION WITH

EPHESIANS II. 12.

*Without God in the world.*

From the former of these passages we learn in what estimation Christianity was held by the great Apostle of the Gentiles. And when we remember who the Apostle was, and what he had been, and what were the circumstances in which he made this triumphant declaration, it is impossible to consider it otherwise than as a most decisive testimony to the divinity of our religion. You all know that he was one of the most gifted and accomplished men of his age; that he had once regarded Christianity with utter abhorrence, and hunted its votaries to prison and to death;—and yet that all his prejudices against it had melted away under the experience he had had of its transforming power, and a desire to vindicate its honours and extend its influence had become the ruling passion of his heart. Hence we find that, in the prospect

of paying a visit to the city of Rome,—the emporium of the world, where philosophy, and luxury, and sensuality, and every thing that is adverse to the gospel, must be encountered,—he declares that he is “not ashamed of the gospel of Christ”: so fully is he convinced that it is stamped with divine authority, and endued with divine energy, that he is willing to appear as its advocate any where—every where; and his whole subsequent life was in accordance with this declaration: wherever he moved, the spirit of moral heroism glowed in his actions, and men took knowledge of him that a martyr’s heart was beating in his bosom.

The latter passage occurs in connexion with that part of the epistle to the Ephesians, in which the Apostle institutes a contrast between their condition while they were sunk in the degradation of Paganism, and their condition after having experienced the regenerating influence of the gospel. We are not, however, to understand by the phrase—“without God in the world”—that the Ephesians had been literally without *any* God; for they had worshipped “gods many”; but only that they had no knowledge of the *true* God; and that, in view of the practical tendency of their system, they might properly be denominated *Atheists*.

The two passages then, taken in connexion, fairly present to our consideration *the contrast between Atheism and Christianity*. To exhibit this contrast is the object of the present discourse.

By *Christianity* you will understand me to mean that system of religion, which is inculcated in the volume that we customarily denominate the sacred scriptures. It is that system which, while it includes and illustrates every doctrine of natural religion, contains another set of doctrines of vast moment, to the discovery of which

unassisted reason could never aspire. It recognises man not only as a creature, but as a sinner. It recognises God not only as a Creator, a Preserver, a Lawgiver, but also as a Redeemer. It discloses a new and sublime economy—the economy of redemption ; and while it exhibits it in all the harmony of its bearings, and all the variety of its influence, it points upward to Heaven as the theatre of its everlasting consummation. Other systems may be baptized into the *name* of Christianity ; but that only *deserves* the name, which contemplates man in all his guilt and ruin, and God in all his redeeming mercy ; which throws the sinner helpless into the arms of sovereign grace, and sees not a gleam of hope for him, except through the atoning blood and sanctifying Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ.

By *Atheism* I mean that system, (if system it can be called,) which rejects the existence of an intelligent First Cause of all things. It knows nothing of moral obligation. It blots out the doctrine of man's immortality. It throws the universe up to the blind direction of chance, or chains it down under the iron dominion of fate.—Some, I know, have doubted whether there ever *was* an Atheist : because the evidence of a divine existence has beamed upon their own eye in such an overwhelming blaze, it has seemed to them impossible that any human mind should resist it. But there have been, and still are, men, who have *professed* to hold this scheme, in all its absurdity and horror ; and though I am sure they have never reached their conclusions by the light of reason, I see nothing improbable in the supposition that they may have groped their way thither through the darkness of depravity. I can easily believe that a human being may reach such a desperate hardihood in wickedness, that he may be given up to the folly not only of saying but of

believing, that "there is no God." In this discourse I shall take for granted that the Atheist is a real, and not an imaginary, being; and shall exhibit to you not only the tendency of atheistical doctrines, but the character which has been actually formed under their influence.

The contrast between Atheism and Christianity may be advantageously contemplated, by viewing the influence of each,

- I. Upon the INTELLECT:
- II. Upon the CONSCIENCE:
- III. Upon the HEART:
- IV. Upon the LIFE.

#### I. Upon the INTELLECT.

We may view the two systems *as furnishing MOTIVES for intellectual culture, and as opening a FIELD for intellectual exercise.*

In contemplating *the MOTIVES for intellectual culture*, as presented by the two systems, we may consider,

1. *The views which each system takes of the MIND itself*;—especially of the *design*, and the *duration*, of its existence.

As it is one of the first principles of Atheism that the mind exists without any intelligent cause, it legitimately results from the same principle, that it exists without any design; for design necessarily supposes intelligence.—Nor does the Atheist at all disown this conclusion: so far from it, that it is part of the creed in which he professes to glory, that there is no end to be answered by human existence, apart from the enjoyment that is derived from the indulgence of the passions. The Atheist, like every other man, finds within himself an active, intelligent principle;—a principle by which he thinks as other men think; by which he reasons on many sub-



jects as other men reason ;—a principle which sometimes breaks forth even from *his* bosom with mighty power, and asserts its own dignity, notwithstanding all his efforts to degrade it ;—but he recognises no purpose for which it exists that gives him the least superiority to the brute. Christianity, on the other hand, views the mind not only as an intelligent principle, produced by an intelligent cause, but as designed to accomplish a most important end ;—nothing less than to glorify its Creator by rendering him the perpetual homage of all its powers. And she goes farther, and perceives how the mind is adapted to the purposes for which it was created ;—how it is capable of analyzing the works of God, of holding communion with him in the exercise of devotion, of rendering to him an acceptable obedience, and of becoming in various ways a medium for the manifestation of his glory. In short the Atheist and the Christian find themselves in possession of the same noble faculties ; but the one considers them as pointing to the service of his Creator, the other only to the sensual enjoyment of himself.

Nor is the difference less in the views which the two systems take of the *duration* of the mind's existence. The Atheist laughs at the idea of his own immortality. He regards the thinking principle within him as having resulted from one of the flickerings of chance, and as destined to pass into a state of non-existence when the body ceases to perform its functions. He sees no light from beyond the tomb. He not only impugns the testimony of Him whose name is "the Resurrection and the Life," but he hears not the voice of Reason—he heeds not the native longings of his own spirit. But need I say that the Christian receives the doctrine of immortality with unwavering confidence ? There are witnesses to this truth both without him and within him, whose

testimony is not only decisive but overwhelming; and he is not more thoroughly convinced that there is an intellectual principle belonging to his nature, than that that principle will exist forever. What a mighty difference between believing that this spark of intelligence within me will be extinguished to-morrow, to be re-kindled no more, and that it will burn more and more intensely through an interminable succession of ages!

Now let me ask you whether the Atheist's or the Christian's view of the mind, presents the stronger motives to intellectual culture. I find within me a thinking principle; and of the energy of its operations I cannot doubt, because it is a matter of experience: but if I believe that it is merely the creature of accident;—that accident originated it, and accident sustains it through the brief period of its existence, and that it accomplishes no higher end than the principle of instinct in the brute creation;—what motive can I have to labour patiently and diligently for its development? For even admitting that there is a pleasure in this employment that exceeds any to be derived from mere sensual gratification, yet if there is no end to be accomplished by it apart from this temporary enjoyment, how probable is it that, in the conflict between the animal and intellectual nature, the former will come off triumphant! But if I believe that this spirit within me is designed for an infinitely higher end than a momentary self-gratification;—if I consider it as created for the very purpose of glorifying the Creator by being continually occupied in his service, what more powerful motive can I have than is here presented to cultivate my intellectual powers to the utmost? And then again, suppose it is part of my creed that I am to perish like a brute;—that the intellectual spark will go out as soon as the animal machinery is stopped;—where-

fore should I give myself the trouble of endeavouring to kindle into a bright flame that which is so soon to expire in perpetual darkness? It is by a laborious process that the intellect is cultivated;—and why should I incur so much labour, if, after all, the intellect itself may have no existence to-morrow? But if I believe that my mind has received from its Maker the stamp of immortality; that it is susceptible of an illimitable improvement; that its powers are destined to be developed more and more through eternity; and that they *may* be developed in the very light of Jehovah's throne;—surely I have good reason for cultivating these faculties to the utmost. I will gain as much intellectual vigour as I can; I will make as many great and lofty acquisitions as I can; for I am labouring for immortality. If I were an Atheist, I could justify myself in remaining as ignorant as a brute; but professing, as I do, to aspire to an immortal existence, I am pressed with considerations to make me diligent in the acquisition of useful knowledge. I profess to hope that, after I am dead, I shall be a companion of the angels; and I would fain begin, while I am here, to cultivate my intellect with reference to mingling in their society.

2. Consider the motives to intellectual improvement that grow out of *the different RELATIONS which the two systems contemplate man as sustaining.*

As the Atheist knows no *God*, so he acknowledges no relation to any. Of course he feels no sense of obligation for his existence; for the faculties with which he is endowed, or the opportunities he enjoys for cultivating them: he regards himself as indebted only to chance; and to this it is impossible that he *should* feel any thing like obligation. Hence there is no motive to the cultivation of his intellect from his relation to any Higher Pow-

er : he considers himself as in the strictest sense his own property ; and acts upon the principle that there is no God in Heaven to whom he is accountable for any thing. The Christian, on the other hand, not only recognises the existence of Jehovah, but recognises also the most endearing relations between this glorious Being and himself. He looks up to Him as the Being from whom he derived his existence ; in whom are all his springs ; to whom he is indebted, not only for his intellectual faculties, but for all his means of improving them ; and more than all, he contemplates him, through Jesus Christ, as the author of his eternal redemption. And out of these relations grow the strongest obligations to improve his faculties, so far as God gives him opportunity. For so exalted a gift as the human intellect, and for such various means as he enjoys for its cultivation, he feels that he is deeply accountable ; and the more so in view of his having forfeited his very existence by sin ; and with this accountableness deeply impressed upon his heart, he will of course endeavour to make the best return to his Almighty Benefactor that he can ; and one way in which he will do this, will be by cultivating his faculties, so that they may be more vigorously and efficiently employed in his Benefactor's service. I do not mean by this that every true Christian has of course a cultivated intellect : I only mean that Christianity supplies *motives* for cultivating it, on the ground of obligation to a Higher Power, of which Atheism knows nothing ; and that, just in proportion as this influence of Christianity is felt, will the mind of man be enlightened and elevated.

Scarcely less is the difference in the views which the two systems take of the relation that exists between *man and his fellow man*. The Atheist acknowledges no common bond of union in the human family. He re-



gards the existence of each individual as a mere matter of accident ; and contemplates each as standing in a sort of insulated dreariness ; as obligated in no sense to regard the interests of those around him, especially when they may seem to interfere with his own. The Christian, on the contrary, is taught to regard every man as a brother ;—all being children of a common parent ; all possessing a common nature ; all destined to a common immortality :—and this relation, he instantly perceives, involves an obligation to do good to all men as he has opportunity, and especially to those who may be thrown more immediately within his influence. But in what way can he qualify himself to do good more efficiently, than by the diligent culture of his own powers ? For an enlarged mind not only enables him directly to impart to others his own useful acquisitions, but also to originate and sustain great systems of effort in the cause of intellectual and moral improvement, which have the world for their field. Will not, therefore, the relation which he sustains to his fellow men, bear powerfully upon him as a motive for gaining as much of intellectual strength as possible, by keeping his faculties in vigorous operation ? But no such motive can operate upon the Atheist ; for he does not so much as acknowledge its existence. As he denies all moral obligation,—as he does not even recognise in his fellow man a brother, how can he be impelled to intellectual effort from a conviction that he is bound to promote the general improvement of society ? The idea is indeed absurd ; and he himself would be the first to laugh at it.

Such then are the motives which the two systems present for intellectual culture : let us now contemplate *the FIELD which each opens for intellectual exercise.*

And here I am willing to admit, if you please, that there is some ground which, in a certain sense, may be said to be common to the Atheist and the Christian. The kingdom of nature spreads itself before the eye of each in all its varied magnificence. The sun, moon and stars, look down in their glory upon both. The revolutions of the planets, the changes of the seasons, the succession of day and night, offer themselves as subjects of investigation to both. The animal kingdom, the vegetable kingdom, the mineral kingdom, each presents its countless forms of being, and its diversified hues of splendour, to the contemplation of both. And man's own nature, not only in the organization of his body, but in the constitution of his mind, is as fairly open to the eye of the one as of the other. Nay we may rise yet higher, and keep on common ground still: for there are numberless events occurring in the *moral* world,—events which involve the happiness not only of individuals but of nations,—which fall under the observation of the Atheist as truly as of the Christian. And I am willing to concede that the Atheist *may be* a diligent student both of the works which he sees around him, and of the operations which he feels within him. He may choose the field of his investigation in the heavens, and become eminent as an astronomer; or he may occupy himself in numbering and analyzing the flowers of the field, or in ascertaining the different forms of mineral existence, or in searching into the constitution of the earth which he inhabits, and thus become distinguished in physical science; nay he may look inward, in the exercise of deep and laborious thought, upon his own mind, and make many accurate observations, and even gain the character of an intellectual philosopher; and finally, he may notice the influence of different events and of different

courses of conduct, not only upon individual but national happiness ; and may ascertain facts in connexion with this subject, which shall be of great importance : in short, the whole field of science and philosophy is open to him ; and it is possible that he may labour diligently, and, to a certain extent, successfully, in any part of it. He has not indeed, as I have attempted to show you, the same *motives* to labour in it which the Christian has ; nevertheless, a simple desire of knowledge, or it may be, a mere intellectual vanity, has often prevailed to render the Atheist a diligent student, and to draw from him valuable contributions, especially to the stock of physical science.

But notwithstanding there is so wide a field for intellectual exercise open in common to the Atheist and the Christian, yet even this common ground is by no means the same to both. What though the Atheist may lift up his eyes to the Heavens, and survey with the telescope that luminous field of grandeur that stretches above him ; what though he may dig into the depths of the earth, and analyze the various materials of which it is composed ;—what though he may turn his eye upon the wonderful mechanism of his body, or the wonderful mechanism of his mind, and observe how admirably each member of the one, and each faculty of the other, performs its appropriate office ; yet how much of the interest pertaining to these sublime discoveries is lost, by shutting out the great idea of an intelligent cause ; by regarding the whole system of things as an infinitude of atoms dancing in wild and fortuitous confusion, or borne along by a blind and fatal necessity. Admit, for a moment, if you can endure the revolting supposition, that this stupendous fabric of nature exists by accident ; that accident has kindled up that sun in the heavens ; that

accident has caused the mountains to rise and the oceans to roll, the winds to blow and the seasons to change; that accident clothes the earth with verdure and binds it up in frost; that accident creates and sustains, withers and annihilates;—in a word, that accident is the god that sits on the throne of the universe;—and tell me whether the visible creation opens upon you any longer as a field of glory;—whether the beauties which it presents do not fade upon your eye under the reflection that they exist without any intelligent cause;—whether, as you traverse the universe both of matter and of mind, you are not ready to halt in your investigations, on the ground that nothing like design exists, even where perfect design is apparent;—that there is no certainty in any thing but in the doctrine that every thing is uncertain? But how the scene changes, when you once admit the idea, that the universe has been created, and is preserved, and all its interests directed, by a Being of infinite wisdom and almighty power! How much more instructive does the volume of nature become, when we can discover on every page of it the traces of a divine hand! The heavens put on a more glorious aspect, the trees wear a brighter foliage, the flowers bloom with a fresher fragrance; the animal creation seems more joyous, the mineral creation seems more wonderful, and man's own mind gathers an incomparably higher interest, the moment these various classes of objects are looked at in connexion with the existence of a great First Cause. Let this idea get possession of the mind, and it reduces chaos to order; it brings light out of darkness: the imagination ventures to a loftier height; the judgment acts with fresh confidence and certainty; and every other faculty of the soul finds that a new atmosphere has been created favourable to its vigorous and healthful exercise. It



is as if the sun were suddenly to scatter the thick shades of midnight : it is as if a film were to be taken from the mental eye, and a thousand new beauties and glories to burst upon it in a moment.

I have said that there is some common ground on which the mind of the Christian and the mind of the Atheist may expatiate ; though even here, the one has incomparably greater advantages than the other. But there are vast regions of thought, and those too the sublimest and loveliest over which the mind can wander, from which the Atheist is a voluntary exile, but in which the Christian finds his peculiar element. First of all, there is that momentous truth which is the basis of the whole system of things,—the existence of a God : there is his character, combining every possible perfection,—infinite power, wisdom, justice, benevolence, holiness and truth : there is his government, extending minutely to all beings and all events : there is the immortality of man, and the relations he sustains to this world and the next : there is the redemption of the Son of God in its origin, progress and consummation : there is the resurrection of the dead, the conflagration of the world, the retributions of the judgment, the new Heavens and the new earth, and a complete illustration of Jehovah's character in the eternal doom of the righteous and the reprobate. What subjects in the universe, I ask, do not dwindle into insignificance when compared with these ? What other field is there in which the mind can so advantageously and so delightfully bring into exercise its powers ? Where else are there such lofty heights for the imagination to climb ;—where else such mighty depths for the intellect to penetrate ;—where so much to quicken and elevate the whole intellectual man, as is presented to us in these exalted subjects ? It is in the

contemplation of these that the Christian advances towards that intellectual perfection which is to make part of the glory of his character in the next world. But if the Atheist casts an eye towards these sublime fields of thought, they seem to him overshadowed with sepulchral darkness. He insists that there is no beauty, or harmony, or loveliness here ; that this is the region of wild and fruitless conjecture, and of deep and revolting absurdity. He knows no genial quickening influence from hence to invigorate his faculties, or urge him forward in the career of mental improvement. No, the Atheist never enters here—he cannot without ceasing to be an Atheist. But here the Christian is most at home : here he breathes and moves with freedom, and it is his privilege to reflect that the field which is open to him now will continue open, and will widen and brighten upon his vision through everlasting ages.

Is there not then, my friends, a mighty contrast between the influence of Christianity and the influence of Atheism on the intellect of man ? Are we not fairly conducted to this conclusion, both by a view of the motives which the two systems present to intellectual culture, and the fields which they respectively open for intellectual exercise ? But perhaps it may occur to some of you that there is an objection which requires to be answered before this conclusion can be fully admitted ;—viz, that there have been found among the advocates of Atheism men of high intellectual culture, whose acquisitions have scarcely had a parallel in the age in which they have lived. I reply to this objection, first, that the cases referred to are exceptions from the general fact ; and that while there has been here and there an intellectual Atheist, the mass have been sunk in brutish ignorance and stupidity. And these exceptions only prove

that there is a native energy in the mind, which even Atheism has not, in all cases, the power to repress : it shows that the intelligent principle even in the bosom of the Atheist, will, in some degree, have its own way ; that its fires will burn notwithstanding the cold and desolate region which it inhabits ; that its powers will expand amidst influences which tend only to a dwarfish inferiority. In short, every cultivated Atheist is a glaring contradiction of his own system ;—a standing proof that the mind was not made to be subjected to its withering influence.

II. If such is the contrast between Atheism and Christianity in their influence upon the intellect, let us inquire, secondly, whether a similar contrast does not exist in their influence upon the CONSCIENCE.

I observe then,

1. First, that Atheism *denies the existence* of what we call conscience, while Christianity *asserts* it.

The Atheist cannot indeed deny that most men have, at times, fearful apprehensions in respect to the future ;—indeed he cannot deny that there is in the human bosom precisely that which we call a sense of guilt ; but then he will have it that it is nothing better than childish cowardice ; a mere bugbear which accident has, some how or other, introduced into the soul, to haunt it with needless and foolish apprehensions. And in denying the existence of conscience, he surely is not inconsistent with himself ; for the existence of conscience supposes the existence of a God ; and that he denies : the existence of conscience takes for granted that there is some universal rule of action ; and he asserts that there is none : the existence of conscience implies that there is a future state of retribution ; and that with him passes for nothing but a dream. I say then, there is no place in

the system of Atheism for the doctrine of conscience; and the Atheist could not admit it without abandoning every article in his creed.

The Christian, on the other hand, not only recognises the existence of conscience, but acknowledges the authority of its dictates. In its operations he contemplates, not the wild dreams of a terrified fancy, but the sober decisions of enlightened reason. He reverences it both as a counsellor and a judge. He regards it as holding the highest office in the soul;—an office to which it has been appointed by the great Law-giver and Judge of all. In the Bible he contemplates the rule by which its decisions are to be formed: in a future state of existence he contemplates the scene of exact retribution to which it infallibly points. Its slightest intimations, though they may come only in a whisper, he considers too important to be disregarded; and there is not a day or an hour but he listens to hear what this internal monitor may say to him. While the Atheist has no theory to account for the facts which he is obliged to admit on this subject but the theory of chance, the Christian *has* a theory which not only includes in it the idea of design, but which recognises God's supreme authority as a Law-giver and man's accountableness as a subject of his government.

I have said that the Atheist denies the existence of conscience;—but he *has* a conscience after all; for he is constituted precisely as other men are; and the elements of his constitution remain the same in spite of the horrors of his creed. And sometimes the secret comes out, when he would be more than willing to conceal it, that even the poison of Atheism is not powerful enough to neutralize the energies of this inward principle; else how will you account for it that a distinguished Atheist, while travelling upon one of our own lakes, fell upon his knees



amidst the terrors of a storm, and prayed for deliverance ; or that another still more distinguished, should, upon his dying bed, have sent for a priest, and declared that he died in the bosom of the church ? I say then, much as the Atheist may ridicule the idea of conscience, he has no power to annihilate it ; and though, in some instances, there may seem to be no evidences of its existence, yet even *there* it is not dead but sleepeth. But though Atheism cannot extinguish this principle, it can and does exert a powerful influence upon it ; and hence I observe,

2. That Atheism *darkens* the conscience, while Christianity *enlightens* it.

Any system of error whatever, and especially any which deeply involves man's relations to his Creator, must have a tendency to pervert the moral discernment ; but if this is true even of those systems which still recognise the existence of a God, what must not be true of Atheism, which begins by blotting out the doctrine of the divine existence ? Is not the soul that believes there is no God, no rule of duty, no future retribution, in a moral midnight ; and if conscience really forms any enlightened decisions where such a creed is professedly held, does it not prove that it has within itself some beams of natural light which even the blackness of Atheism cannot quench ;—that it practically, however feebly, holds on upon some great truths, while the language of the lips would seem to imply that it had cut loose from all of them ? While I maintain that every Atheist has a conscience which will sooner or later be filled with a terrifying and torturing light, I also maintain that his creed is the most perfect of all devices to exclude every ray of light, until it is let in upon his naked spirit in the next world. If all error is darkness, surely Atheism is a darkness that can be felt ; and if it be not absolutely

total, it is only because nature has her trembling, though concealed, misgivings.

Christianity sheds a flood of light into the conscience. Besides exhibiting a general rule of duty in the law of God, she carries out that rule into all the details of daily practice; and her light is so clear and strong, that it is easy to discriminate between the right and wrong of every subject that is viewed by it. Moreover she not only inculcates, but furnishes every needed facility for attaining, inward purity; and nothing is more certain than that a holy heart is itself a fountain of light to the conscience. And she leads man continually to the business of self communion, hereby disclosing to him his corruptions and errors, and showing him how far he has deviated from the standard of perfect purity. And more than all, she brings him directly into communion with the infinite God—the God of perfect truth, and wisdom, and holiness; and while he reverently waits “before Jehovah’s awful throne,” supplicating for a knowledge of his most secret sins, his conscience is thrown into the full day light of the divine presence, and he is ready to exclaim with David, “Thy commandment is exceeding broad”!

3. Atheism *paralyzes* the conscience; Christianity *quickens* it. Light is the proper element for activity; darkness for repose and inaction. In the light of this present world there is life and motion; in the darkness of the grave man lives not, moves not, but corruption and the worm have complete dominion over him. While the day lasts, man is busy with the concerns of the world; but when the night cometh, he ceases to labour and loses himself in sleep. Vegetation, when confined in darkness, soon puts on a sickly and withered appearance; but when brought into the light, it revives, and looks as healthful and blooming as ever. And so it is

with man's conscience,—give it light, and it will be all life and activity; it will do its office with amazing promptness, and sometimes with appalling energy; but let it be thrown into the darkness of error, and it will be dormant; and the deeper the darkness, the more its insensibility will resemble the torpor of death.

I have already shown you that Atheism is the darkness of midnight; that Christianity is the brightness of noon day: it follows then, by necessity, that, just in proportion as the one or the other is practically received, the conscience must be paralyzed or quickened. And I appeal to facts for proof that it is so. Where did you ever see a professed Atheist who gave you any evidence, unless in affliction or in death, that his conscience had any dominion over him? Where did you ever see an humble follower of Jesus, or one who had a deep practical impression of the truths of the Bible, whose conscience was not quick to discern, and sensitive to feel, the difference between a right and a wrong action? The Atheist can plunge into the very depths of crime, and contract guilt at which a fiend might shudder; and yet the worm that never dies may not stir in his bosom: but the Christian cannot seriously contemplate the least violation of God's law of which he has been guilty, but his ever wakeful conscience takes cognizance of the sin, and produces a tumult in his breast which nothing but an application to the blood of sprinkling can assuage.

III. Let me now, thirdly, direct your attention to the opposite influences which the two systems exert upon the HEART. I shall consider them in their tendency to *mould its affections*, and *satisfy its desires*.

That we may rightly estimate their influence in *moulding the affections*, it is necessary that we bear in mind that the moral character of an individual, by which

I mean the real state of his heart, is determined, in no small degree, by his intellectual views ; and that, as truth and error are directly opposite in their nature, so they exert a directly opposite influence upon the heart. I know that systems of gross error have sometimes been professed where there has been the decency of a moral life ; nevertheless, this does not prove that even external morality is the fruit of error, or that error is not naturally and essentially hostile to morality : it only proves that there may be countervailing influences arising from constitutional temperament, or education, or some other cause, strong enough to prevent the full and legitimate operation of error ; or, as the case may be, that the error which is professed sits so loosely upon the mind, and is held with so little intelligence and reflection, that it exercises but a partial dominion over the heart. And, on the other hand, who needs be told that truth, even truth of the noblest kind, is often professedly received, where none of its legitimate fruits ever appear ; either because it is held as a mere speculation, or because its influence is neutralized by the power of corruption ? But notwithstanding these accidental, counteracting influences both in respect to truth and error, it still remains true that each has its appropriate influence ; that truth is the seed of virtue, that error is the germ of corruption and crime.

With this remark in view as the basis of what I am to say under this article, I observe,

1. That Atheism *contracts* the affections, while Christianity *expands* them.

There is not an article in the Atheist's creed but is directly calculated to foster a spirit of black misanthropy. How must he regard his fellow man in the light of the doctrine that there is no God in Heaven whom they can



recognise as a common Father? Surely not as a brother; for this relationship implies the existence of an almighty parent to whom they are both indebted for their own existence. How can he regard his fellow man in view of the doctrine that death is an eternal sleep?—Why surely as too unimportant a being to call forth his regards; for wherefore should I let my affections go out and fasten upon the insect of a day? How can he regard his fellow man in consideration of the doctrine that the members of the human family sustain no relationship to each other, but that which is sustained by atoms meeting in fortuitous concourse? Certainly he cannot recognise in such a being any claim upon his affections; for wherefore should his heart beat to mere particles of matter which accident has thrown together in one way rather than in another? He has his own personal wants; and he feels them; and there is nothing in his system which teaches him to look beyond them. Nay, if a spirit of generosity were one of the original elements of his nature, it is scarcely possible that it should long withstand the cold and withering influence of his creed; and if sometimes his nature so far gets the better of his principles that he weeps for another's wo, it were such a contradiction to his system that he may consistently enough sit down and ridicule the operation of chance in his own weakness.

Christianity, need I say, has no communion with a selfish spirit. She came down from the skies as an angel of benevolence. She arrayed herself in her native Heavens with the robe of benevolence. She looked abroad upon the world with the smile of benevolence. She has performed the most benevolent work to which the heart of man or angel ever beat. The spirit which she breathes, the precepts which she inculcates, the ex-

ample which she exhibits, all justify the proclamation which she made, on her descent to earth, of "good will to men." And into whatsoever heart she enters, she thaws the icy bands of selfishness, and diffuses the warm glow of kindly affection. She teaches man to recognise in his fellow man every where, and in every variety of circumstances, a brother; and to carry out his regards in the exercise of forgiveness towards enemies, in the exercise of compassion towards the wretched, in the exercise of good will towards all men.

2. *Atheism brutalizes the affections; Christianity refines them.*

The same influence under which the Atheist becomes selfish, renders him brutal. The same influence which freezes up the fountains of generous feeling towards his fellow man, makes him cruel, and vindictive, and malignant. It is a light thing, upon his principles, to sport with human life; for if man is at best only the creature of a day, made for no purpose and destined to no retribution, what matters it though his life should be a little shortened by the hand of his fellow man; and if the Atheist finds it a matter of convenience to shed his blood, why should not his convenience prevail over any childish weakness of his nature which may lead him to revolt at it? Is it possible that a man should hold a doctrine which fully justifies the midnight assassin in his bloody work,—a doctrine which puts my life, and your life, and the life of every man, at the mercy of any wretch who may choose to take it,—a doctrine which, if fully reduced to practice, would convert the world into one immense field of carnage, and rapine, and wo,—I ask, is it possible that a man should cordially hold such a doctrine, and his feelings not become thoroughly brutalized? The history of Atheism shows that it is *not*

possible ;—shows that such an influence hardens the heart into adamant.

How different, how opposite, is the influence of Christianity! The language of gentleness is always upon her lips ; the spirit of benignity is always in her heart ; the sound of her footsteps is the harbinger of heaven-born charity. The rough points in the character of man she contrives to wear off ; the amiable sensibilities of our nature she carefully cherishes ; she drives cruelty out of the heart and brings in mercy in its place ; and though she moves noiseless as the falling dew, yet as the lightning scathes the most rugged oak, so she subdues and softens the most savage spirit. And why should it not be so, when you consider the love, and grace, and power, which enter into her very constitution ? Why should it not be so, when He whose name she bears, and by whose death she lives, was unutterably tender amidst all his greatness ; and not only bore our sorrows while He was upon earth, but is still touched with the feeling of our infirmities, now that He has gone back to Heaven ?

3. Atheism *debases* the affections ; Christianity *exalts* them.

Atheism, as we have already seen, allows but a comparatively narrow field for the operation of the intellect ; and she offers but few inducements to intellectual effort. She leaves her votaries with little else to do than obey the blind impulses of passion ; and she lends a direct and powerful influence to sensualize the whole man.—The man who believes that there is no God to whom he is accountable, no future state in which he is to exist, no relationship subsisting between himself and any other being that involves obligation, has the strongest motives that can be imagined to yield himself up to the most unbridled voluptuousness. Having nothing to

hope on the one hand, and professedly fearing nothing on the other,—at any rate believing that the condition of the future is to be in no way influenced by the doings of the present, what is there to keep him from coming under the complete dominion of his animal nature, and yielding to the promptings of every passion that would bring him down to a level with the brutes?

But it is not more certain that Atheism debases the affections, than that Christianity purifies and exalts them. She does this by opening to the intellect a field of the sublimest truth; by prescribing a course of conduct which is nothing less than perfect obedience to a perfectly holy law; by bringing the soul into direct communion with the fountain of all perfection; by supplying an influence from on high which turns darkness into light, weakness into strength, pollution into holiness, death into life.—Yes, the Christian's spirit has, must have, an ethereal tendency; it is trained to sublime excursions; it is already at home in the atmosphere that surrounds the throne of God; and what is more, God's own Spirit inhabits it, and is pledged to prepare it for an eternal residence in the Heavens. You cannot chain the Christian's affections to earth; for they have received a celestial impulse that keeps them soaring away to the skies.

Such is the influence of the two systems in moulding the affections of the heart: let us now consider their influence in *satisfying its desires*.

And here, if it would not lead me into too wide a range, I might call your attention distinctly to each of the several desires which make part of our original constitution, and show you how Atheism satisfies none of them—how Christianity satisfies them all. I might show you how Atheism mocks the desire of *existence*, by opening before the mind the hideous gulf of annihili-



lation; how Christianity meets it, by establishing not only the immortality of the soul, but the resurrection of the body. I might show you how Atheism mocks the desire of *action*, by supplying no adequate motive to action, and limiting the exercise of our faculties to the brief period of the present life; how Christianity meets it, by at once giving our faculties a right direction, and opening a noble field for their exercise. I might show you how Atheism mocks the desire of *knowledge*, by miserably contracting the field of thought, and breathing over every subject an air of skepticism; how Christianity meets it, not only by leading the intellect, as with the hand of an angel, from one part of God's visible works to another, but by throwing open the gates of other worlds, that the beams of immortal truth may pour down in all their brightness upon the mental eye. I might show you how Atheism mocks the desire of the *approbation and esteem of other beings*, by originating a character which every virtuous being must hate, and which every intelligent being must condemn; how Christianity meets it, by forming in man a spirit of benevolence, and disposing him to do good to all as he has opportunity. I might show you how Atheism mocks the desire of *society*, by inspiring a distrustful and unsocial spirit, and making man the enemy of man; how Christianity meets it, by inculcating a spirit of universal good will, and associating men together for purposes of mutual enjoyment and improvement. But instead of entering so broad a field, I shall consider the several desires of the soul as concentrated in the general desire of *happiness*; and shall dismiss this branch of the subject with two or three remarks illustrative of the contrast between the two systems in their bearing upon this leading and comprehensive desire.

1. Atheism produces *doubt* : Christianity produces *certainty*.

What can the Atheist know in respect to the future ? For he not only laughs at the testimony of God's word as an absurd and miserable fabrication, but blots out the doctrine of Providence, and sees no evidence of intelligence or design in any thing that exists, or any thing that occurs. He cuts himself off therefore from every means of anticipating the future, and is obliged to wait in gloomy suspense for the revelations of chance, as they are made in his actual experience. If it be true that there is no intelligent Governour of the Universe, and no fixed laws for the regulation of events, then I ask the Atheist where is his security that his hands and feet will not change places to-morrow ; or that he may not be transformed into an owl, or a monkey, or a serpent ? I charge him with inconsistency in doing as other men do—in making calculations for the future ; for why calculate upon *any* thing, where chance has the controul of *every* thing ? Does he tell me that the operations of chance, as they have hitherto fallen under his observation, have been so uniform that he ventures to believe that the thing that hath been will be ? Then I ask him whether this regularity is not contrary to the very nature of chance ; and whether, if he contemplates it a little longer, he will not see that his whole system is based in contradiction and absurdity ? But suppose the privilege be allowed him of reasoning from the past to the future, so far as the present life is concerned, yet surely he can form no conclusions in respect to the consequences of death, for those consequences have never come within the range of his observation. He professes indeed to believe that the spirit dies, because his senses do not take cognizance of its separate existence ; but

how can he be *assured* of this, if his favourite doctrine of chance be true? That chance has sometimes sported with his happiness here he cannot deny: how then does he know but that, from having exercised her reign with comparative lenity, she may station herself on a throne of vengeance, and surround herself with the insignia of wo, and bathe herself in a fountain of blood, and cruelly mock his sweet hope of annihilation? How does he know but that she may force upon his eye, as it glares in the last agony, a sentence written by her own dark fingers, consigning him to an illimitable course of suffering? Why may she not stand ready, the moment the breath stops, to renew his existence in some other form, and to perpetuate his existence in some other world, where every object will be clothed with terror, every thought will be a channel of agony? I know the Atheist believes he shall be annihilated; but he may, even upon his own principles, *chance* to be immortal.

But where Atheism generates the horrors of suspense, Christianity brings the confidence of certainty. She does not indeed lay open to man the whole plan of God's operations; but she reveals to him every thing that it is important for him to know;—as much probably as he is able to comprehend. The great fact that there is a future life she places in the light of noon day. The fact that there is a glorious Heaven within our reach, the means by which it may be obtained, and the evidence of our title to it, she leaves unembarrassed even by conjecture. She does not indeed forewarn us of all the particular changes which await us in the present life; but she does what is incomparably better,—points out the means by which every change may be rendered a blessing;—every affliction be made to contribute to the eternal weight of glory. In short, while Atheism unsettles every thing,

Christianity renders every thing certain. While Atheism sickens the soul with suspense, or chills it with despair, Christianity permits it to walk with confidence through a broad field of glorious realities.

2. Atheism supplies *no object adequate to fill the capacities of the soul*: such an object is supplied by Christianity.

Let man have originated as he may, one thing is certain—that he has some how or other wonderful capacities—capacities for thought—capacities for feeling—capacities for enjoyment:—and these capacities must have an adequate object, else man is not happy. Now the Atheist is constituted in this respect just as other men are; and he is subject to the same great laws in respect to the means of happiness with those who own their immortality: in this respect as in every other, the constitution of his nature is at issue with the doctrines of his creed. But in excluding God from the universe, he shuts out the only object by which the capacities of his soul can be filled. He has nothing left but this poor world; and what is that to feed the human spirit?—Especially what is it when it is bereaved of its God; and thus the brightest sun that illumines it is extinguished, and the glory that really hangs around it, vanishes? The world is not adequate to fill the soul, even when viewed in the mirror of Christian Philosophy, as Jehovah's work: what then shall be said of it, when viewed in connexion with the doctrines of Atheism, especially with the doctrine that all things live and move and have their being in chance?

But the Christian *has*, in the God of the Bible, an object by which the capacities of the soul are completely filled. As an object of thought, every other being in comparison with him dwindles to nothing; for there is



a depth of riches in his perfections which even angelick faculties will never be able to fathom. As an object of affection, he is all that the soul can ask; for there are treasures of love in his heart which an angelick tongue might labour in vain to proclaim. As an object of confidence, he leaves every other in the shade; for upon what can the soul rely so safely as infinite power, wisdom, goodness and faithfulness? In short, his character presents an immeasurable field of glory, over which every faculty of the mind and every feeling of the heart may wander forever, without satiety and without disappointment.

3. *If Christianity be true, Atheism hazards every thing: if Atheism be true, Christianity hazards nothing.*

Christianity takes for granted that man is a ruined sinner; and though she does nothing to bring him into condemnation, yet she lifts up her voice to second the warnings of his own conscience that he is condemned; and she claims to be a messenger of mercy, bringing terms of deliverance and salvation, which he must accept at the peril of his soul. Her language is no less decisive than this—"He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned." The Atheist believes not;—and this is not all—he pours contempt upon the whole scheme of redemption; and he not only rejects the Son, but the Father who sent him. If Christianity then be what she claims to be, there is a curse hanging over the head of the Atheist, which has in it a height and a depth of wo, which it has not entered the mind of man to conceive. Nay, if Christianity be a fable, and natural religion only be admitted, what has he to expect but that *she* will take terrible vengeance upon him for the despite shown to her authority? Yes,



only admit that there is a God in Heaven, and the Atheist may well pant for annihilation rather than fall into his hands.

But if Atheism be true, the Christian hazards nothing by rejecting it. Upon the Atheist's own principles, the Christian is in every respect as safe as himself. I shall sleep in the grave of annihilation as quietly as he ; and he shall not be able to laugh at me for my credulity, when neither he nor I have any longer an existence. I have gained something in the enjoyment which Christianity has yielded me here ; I have found much comfort in believing that a gracious Providence watches over me, and sometimes have had bright and cheering visions of the future ; and if death is an eternal sleep, I would still bless Christianity for the pleasant dreams which she has caused to come over me, especially as I shall not feel the disappointment when I have ceased to exist. In any case then, I am on better ground than the Atheist ; for I am certain that my lot hereafter cannot be worse than his, and here I am sure it is better.

Are we not then fairly brought to the conclusion that Atheism mocks, and Christianity meets, that desire in the heart of man in which all other desires are included ? If Atheism yields suspense, and Christianity produces certainty ; if Atheism leaves the soul without any object adequate to fill its capacities, and Christianity supplies one which is entirely adequate ; if Atheism runs an infinite hazard, and Christianity runs no hazard, who will hesitate to acknowledge the contrast between Christianity and Atheism in their influence upon the happiness of man ?

IV. It only remains, fourthly, to contrast the influence of the two systems upon the LIFE. And in doing this I shall detain you with but few remarks.

The life is only the outward expression of the inward feelings and principles ; and the one corresponds to the other, as the impression on the wax corresponds to the seal by which it is made. Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit ; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. The legitimate fruit of a darkened conscience and a depraved heart, is a course of evil doing : the legitimate fruit of an enlightened conscience and a sanctified heart, is a course of well-doing ;—a life over which virtue, in all her loveliness and majesty, steadily presides.

Now have we not seen that Atheism is a deadly poison in the fountains of moral action ; that Christianity imparts to them a pure and healthful influence ? Have we not seen that Atheism renders the conscience dark and powerless, thus removing the strongest barriers to crime ;—that Christianity enlightens and quickens it, thus opposing the most formidable resistance to crime ? Have we not seen that, under the influence of Atheism, the heart contracts a withering selfishness, a brutal obduracy, a wretched debasement ; that, under the influence of Christianity, it becomes generous and tender, and lifts itself up in great and sublime aspirations ? Are we not then irresistibly conducted to the conclusion that Christianity must have its fruit in a virtuous life ; that Atheism must have its fruit in a vicious life ?

I say it *must* be so, judging from the universal laws of moral action ; and I go farther and say that it *is* so ; and sustain myself in the assertion by a reference to the history both of Atheism and of Christianity.

The great jubilee of Atheism, you know, was the French Revolution. Then her volcanic fires which had been silently accumulating while the world was asleep, broke forth with the fury of a long imprisoned element, and converted a whole country, for a time, into one burn-

ing field of desolation. It was just when France decreed that she was without a God and that she would have none; when she inscribed upon her tomb stones and upon the gates of her sepulchres, "Death an eternal sleep"; when she caused Atheism to ride in triumph in all her high places, and hunted Christianity into the caves and dens of the earth;—it was just then that her blood flowed like a river, and the guillotine rested not from its work day nor night. I need not tell you how suspicion took the place of confidence; how every thing that is kindly and generous in the human heart withered away, and every thing that is selfish, and base, and cruel, grew rank and flourishing; how the tenderest relations of life lost all their sacredness, and the heart's blood was often let out by the hand which was pledged to offices of friendship; how suicide multiplied its victims by thousands, as if it were on a race with the guillotine; how the last vestige of domestick happiness was blotted out, and law, and order, and civilization, were entombed, and every man trembled at the touch of his fellow man, lest the next moment a dagger should be plunged into his bosom. It was as if the heavens were pouring down torrents of blood; as if the earth were heaving forth surges of fire; as if the atmosphere were impregnated with the elements of death; while the reign of Atheism lasted. Other nations saw the smoke of the torment, as it ascended up, and trembled lest upon them also the day of vengeance was about to open.

Now to these bloody triumphs of Atheism during the French Revolution, let me oppose the mild and gracious triumphs of Christianity during the apostolick age; for that no doubt was the period of her greatest purity. She made conquests, but they were bloodless conquests; they were the conquests of truth, and grace, and love.

She never drew a dagger, though her votaries often meekly received it into their own bosoms. She never gathered fagots for the burning of her enemies; though her votaries often felt the fagots on fire wasting away their own flesh. The spirit of kindness was in her heart. The law of kindness was upon her lips. Deeds of kindness were her every day work. She was in the midst of enemies who would gladly have crushed her; but even they were obliged to render a tribute to her excellence. Pilate could find no fault in the Author of Christianity; neither could they who came after Pilate find any just ground of accusation against Christianity herself. She was maligned; she was insulted; she was persecuted; but she kept steadily forward in the execution of her design to renovate and bless the world.

But lest you should imagine that the contrast which I have now exhibited is too general, as relating rather to the influence exerted upon communities than upon individuals, let me, for a moment, show you what the two systems *can* do, *have* done, for *individual* character; and I can think of no two names to which I may refer with more confidence in the way of illustration, than *Voltaire* and *Wilberforce*;—both of them names which stand out with prominence upon the world's history; and each, in its own way, imperishable.

Voltaire was perhaps the master spirit in the school of French Atheism\*; and though he was not alive to participate in the horrors of the revolution, probably he did

\* I am not aware that Voltaire ever formally professed himself an Atheist; and I well know that his writings contain some things which would seem inconsistent with atheistical opinions. But not only are many of his works deeply pervaded by the spirit of Atheism, but there is scarcely a doctrine of natural religion which he has not somewhere directly and bitterly assailed; so that I cannot doubt that he falls fairly into the ranks of those who say, "there is no God."



more by his writings to combine the elements for that tremendous tempest than any other man. And now I undertake to say that you may draw a character in which there shall be as much of the blackness of moral turpitude as your imagination can supply; and yet you shall not have exceeded the reality as it was found in the character of this apostle of Atheism. You may throw into it the darkest shades of selfishness, making the man a perfect idolater of himself; you may paint the serpent in his most wily form to represent deceit and cunning; you may let sensuality stand forth in all the loathsomeness of a beast in the mire; you may bring out envy, and malice, and all the baser, and all the darker, passions, drawing nutriment from the pit; and when you have done this, you may contemplate the character of Voltaire, and exclaim, "Here is the monstrous original!" The fires of his genius kindled only to wither and consume; he stood, for almost a century, a great tree of poison, not only cumbering the ground, but infusing death into the atmosphere; and though its foliage has long since dropped off, and its branches have withered, and its trunk fallen, under the hand of time, its deadly root still remains; and the very earth that nourishes it is cursed for its sake.

And now I will speak of Wilberforce; and I do it with gratitude and triumph;—gratitude to the God who made him what he was; triumph, that there is that in his very name which ought to make Atheism turn pale. Wilberforce was the friend of man. Wilberforce was the friend of enslaved and wretched man. Wilberforce (for I love to repeat his name) consecrated the energies of his whole life to one of the noblest objects of benevolence: it was in the cause of injured Africa that he often passed the night in intense and wakeful thought; that



he counselled with the wise, and reasoned with the unbelieving, and expostulated with the unmerciful; that his heart burst forth with all its melting tenderness, and his genius with all its electrick fire; that he turned the most accidental meeting into a conference for the relief of human wo, and converted even the Senate House into a theatre of benevolent action. Though his zeal had at one time almost eaten him up, and the vigour of his frame was so far gone that he stooped over and looked into his own grave, yet his faith failed not; his fortitude failed not; and blessed be God, the vital spark was kindled up anew, and he kept on labouring through a long succession of years; and at length, just as his friends were gathering around him to receive his last whisper, and the angels were gathering around to receive his departing spirit, the news, worthy to be borne by angels, was brought to him, that the great object to which his life had been given was gained; and then, Simeon-like, he clasped his hands to die; and went off to Heaven with the sound of deliverance to the captive vibrating sweetly upon his ear.

Both Voltaire and Wilberforce are dead; but each of them lives in the character he has left behind him.—And now who does not delight to honour the character of the one; who does not shudder to contemplate the character of the other? I once, for a moment, stood by the dark cell in which the mortal part of Voltaire is entombed; and I could not resist the impression that it was no ordinary sepulchral gloom that was hanging around me: and I remember that my guide through the cemetery designated the spot in a kind of under tone of horror, which seemed to say that even *he* had associated it with the prospect of the resurrection of damnation. But who could stand by the grave of Wilberforce without a flood

of sweet and glorious recollections? Who would not delight to make his grave as fragrant with flowers as his memory is fragrant with virtues?

And now, may I not ask, do I wrong the Atheist, if I call him a *monster*? For is not he a monster who has been created by the divine hand, and lives upon the divine bounty, and yet denies the divine existence? Is not he a monster who lifts his feeble arm to shut the great Creator out of his universe; who moves his stammering tongue to defy all the power that there is above him; who obstinately shuts his ear against the ten thousand voices that speak to him of Jehovah? May I not call him a monster who, with a parricidal spirit, would strike at the existence of his Father and my Father; who would mock my best hopes by talking to me of annihilation; who would sunder all the ties of gratitude and affection that bind me to my fellow men; who would dry up every fountain of joy, and open upon me the flood gates of wo? I do not say that he will ever be a suicide; but I choose to wait till his breath has left him, before I assure myself of the contrary. I do not decide that he will turn out an assassin; but if I supposed he were in circumstances in which he might profit by my death, I should be afraid to meet him in the dark. He is a monster in his creed; and if his creed have its legitimate influence over him, he is a monster in his feelings; and if his feelings be not greatly restrained by countervailing influences, he is a monster in his conduct.

Do I wrong the Atheist if I call him a *fool*?—But I borrow from authority which none of *us* will dispute:—"The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God." And point me to one who deserves the name, if the Atheist does not deserve it? When the evidences of the di-

vine existence beam forth in a flood of light from every part of the universe, he shuts his eyes upon it all, and walks about in a deep darkness of his own creation. When God offers himself to him as a Protector, a Guide, a Saviour, he insultingly turns away from him as if he had no existence but in the dreams of children ; and commits himself to the protection of chance. When immortal glory is fairly within his reach, and the path to immortal glory is clearly marked out to him, his eye is attracted away from the brightness of this prospect, and he would fain have us believe that his heart lingers joyfully upon the black horrors of annihilation. He determines that he will not exist, when God has decreed to him an immortality ; and while he imagines that he is dancing about the grave of his own spirit, he is really dancing on the margin of that gulf in which his spirit will writhe and sink amidst the horrors of an ever living death. Yes, God himself has called him a fool ; and the experience of his whole eternity will show him how well he deserved the name.

I was about to ask, Do I wrong the Atheist if I call him a *brute*? But this is rather what he claims to be, than what he really is. He may indeed, upon his own principles, herd with the wild beast upon the mountains, or creep with the reptile on the earth ; and there is not one of the animal creation, so terrible for its fierceness, so contemptible for its littleness, so disgusting for its loathsomeness, but he may consistently take it to his bosom as a brother ; for though he is compelled to acknowledge that human reason is somewhat above animal instinct, yet he regards both as accidental properties of matter, which are destined to expire in an eternal night of unconsciousness. But though he may be a brute in his feelings, and a brute in his aspirations, he

will find himself far removed from a brute in his destiny : for that spirit within him shall run parallel in its existence with the immortality of God. Yes, he is *my* brother ; and I would fain proffer him the aid of a brother's hand, to lead him out of this labyrinth into which he has voluntarily plunged : I would fain proffer him the sympathy of a brother's heart, in view of his being dead to all the glories of an immortal existence : I would fain proffer him the benefit of a brother's prayers, that his heart may begin to beat to the honour not only of a creating but redeeming God. Come, then, thrice blessed Christianity, and cast out the unclean spirit from his bosom : come and pour thy light upon his eye, and take up thy residence in his heart ! In the brightness of thy beams let him see the immortality of his own spirit ! When the sun henceforth rises upon him, and the face of nature smiles upon him ; when his eye is filled with beauty, and his ear is filled with melody ; let him see that in all this there is a testimony to the existence and presence of God ! Lay upon him thy wonder working hand, and mould him into a fit companion for the angels ! Divine Christianity, be thine the work of subduing him, and thine the glory of the conquest !

## LECTURE II.

### CHRISTIANITY CONTRASTED WITH PAGANISM.

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ROMANS I. 16.

*I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ.*

IN CONNEXION WITH

ROMANS I. 23.

— *And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four footed beasts, and creeping things.*

It may possibly occur to some of you that, in passing from Atheism, a system which acknowledges no God, to Paganism, a system which recognises a plurality of gods, I am making a somewhat violent transition. But a moment's reflection, I think, will satisfy you that the distance between them is much less than you might at first imagine. The doctrine of the divine existence is the foundation of all religion. As Atheism completely annihilates religion by blotting out that doctrine, so Paganism bereaves religion of its glory by a wretched perversion of it. The territories of Atheism do indeed constitute the darkest part of the whole region of error;—the part which lies nearest to the abodes of eternal dark-



ness : but adjacent to these are the dominions of Paganism ; and so much do they resemble each other, that an Apostle has actually described the latter by a reference to the most distinguishing characteristic of the former.

The leading feature of Paganism, you all know, is idolatry, or the substitution of the creature for the Creator as an object of worship. We have no means of accurately fixing the period when idolatry took its rise, or of ascertaining the manner in which it originated.—Some have conjectured that it existed before the flood ; and that it must have been included in that fearful description of antediluvian wickedness—that “all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth.” Be that as it may, we are assured that, within four hundred years *after* the deluge, it had, to a great extent, overspread the world ; for, at that period, God called Abraham out of Chaldea for the special purpose of preserving the knowledge of his unity and perfection. From that time to the period of Messiah’s advent, idolatry prevailed among all the nations, with the single exception of the Hebrew ; and even that nation was not at all times exempt from it : and with the same exception, in connexion with those who have embraced the religion of Mohammed, and those who have experienced the benign influence of the gospel, the whole world has been under its dominion from the last mentioned period down to the present hour. Its standard has been reared not only in the midst of intellectual degradation and gross barbarity, but in the very heart of civilization and refinement ; and if the wild Indian of the wilderness deifies the animal that bounds through the forest, or the reptile that crawls beneath his feet, so also has “the glory of the uncorruptible God been changed into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four footed beasts,

and creeping things," by the immortal poets, and philosophers, and orators, of Greece and Rome. It is estimated that, at this hour, idolatry in connexion with the monstrous system of error to which it belongs, constitutes the religion of no less than five-eighths of the world's whole population. It is, of course, subject to various modifications, arising from the peculiar circumstances of different countries and different periods; but in respect to all its essential features, it is, in every country, and at every period, the same.

My design in this discourse is to exhibit the contrast which is presented by the two passages which I have just read to you ;—*the contrast between Paganism and Christianity*. You will perceive at once, however, that I can do nothing more than treat the subject in a general manner; not only because the field which it opens is of almost immeasurable extent, but because a large part of the facts connected with it could not be recited in consistency with the decorum that is due to the circumstances in which we are assembled. In illustrating the character of Paganism, I shall feel myself at liberty to select facts from any part of the wide field before me, without respect either to the past or the present, to a state of refinement or a state of barbarism.

We will consider the contrast between the two systems in respect to

I. The DOCTRINES which they inculcate:

II. The WORSHIP which they enjoin:

III. The MORALITY which they produce.

I. The DOCTRINES which they inculcate.

1. Paganism teaches that there is a *plurality* of gods: Christianity, that there is *but one* God.

If we look into the sacred scriptures, we shall find overwhelming evidence that the heathen nations of antiquity did not limit themselves to one object of religious worship ; insomuch that they are most frequently designated by a reference to the plurality, and sometimes to the multitude, of their gods. In announcing to the Israelites his determination to effect their deliverance from Egyptian bondage, Jehovah declares, "Against *all* the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment." In giving them directions in respect to the course they should adopt after their arrival in Canaan, he says, "Ye shall utterly destroy all the places wherein the nations which ye shall possess served their *gods*, upon the high mountains and upon the hills, and under every green tree ;—and ye shall hew down the graven images of their *gods*, and destroy the names of them out of that place." Even the Jewish nation themselves gradually fell into gross idolatry ; insomuch that, during the administration of the judges, the sacred historian informs us that "they served Baalim and Ashteroth, and the *gods* of Syria, and the *gods* of Zidon, and the *gods* of Moab, and the *gods* of the children of Ammon, and the *gods* of the Phillistines, and forsook the Lord and served not him." I do not here inquire what were the particular properties or provinces of these gods : I only adduce these passages to prove that the scriptures recognise the heathen religion as having its foundation in polytheism.

If we turn to profane history, we shall find it rendering a most decisive testimony in perfect accordance with the scriptural statements on this subject. Every ancient nation of which it has transmitted to us any account, it represents as having its plurality of gods. The Chaldeans, the Egyptians, the Phenicians, the Carthaginians, the Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Medes and

Persians, the Greeks and Romans, are all represented as Polytheists. In the time of Hesiod, who is supposed to have flourished about nine hundred years before Christ, Greece had her thirty thousand gods, who were considered as in a sense domesticated; and in addition to these, according to Arch-bishop Potter, there was a custom which obliged them to entertain many strange deities.

The nations of whose Polytheism history has given us a more full account than any other, are the Greeks and Romans. And while their historians have been abundantly explicit, their poets have also added a most important testimony. For though it be conceded that the productions of this latter class are, to a great extent, works of imagination, yet it must also be conceded that their machinery was constructed from the popular mythology; and who does not know that they abound with allusions to the gods; and that if the agency of Jupiter and Juno, Mars and Minerva, Æolus and Neptune, Venus and Apollo, were withdrawn from the most splendid poetical productions of Greece and Rome, they would not only at once become frigid and uninteresting, but well nigh cease to have an existence? The philosophers too, while they corroborate the historical fact that Polytheism existed, sanction its existence in their grave instructions. Socrates and Plato, Cicero and Seneca, Epictetus and Marcus Antoninus,—men whose names constitute the brightest galaxy of the heathen world—have all, in one way or another, appeared as the advocates of Polytheism; and even Aristotle, atheistical as he was in some of his opinions, still recommended the worship of the gods, as a service due from the citizen to the magistrate.

I have spoken of the past ; but if we look abroad upon the Pagan nations of the present day, we shall see nothing to vary our conclusion. Wherever man has lost sight of the true God, and has not plunged into absolute Atheism, there he has multiplied the objects of idol worship. Hindostan alone is said to contain no less than three hundred and thirty millions of gods ; all in some form or other receiving the homage of immortal beings. Indeed you may go into any country you please where Paganism reigns, and you will find it thickly peopled with deities.

In opposition to all this, Christianity asserts that there is but one God ; and in doing so she only echoes the testimony of uncorrupted reason. One God, such as she recognises, seems to her adequate to every purpose ; while millions of gods of any other character, would be inadequate to any end for which divine agency is needed. In all the forms of existence by which she is surrounded, and to which she can gain access ; in the laws which regulate the natural world, and in the laws which regulate the moral world, she perceives a perfect unity of design ; and she cannot believe that this could have been the result of separate, much less of conflicting, agencies. In the belief of the divine unity she has a principle that not only approves itself to reason the moment it is proposed, but accounts for all the harmony that pervades the creation. Though she borrows this principle from natural religion, yet she holds it as the basis of all her own peculiar discoveries.

2. Paganism erects into deities objects that are *senseless, imperfect, unworthy* : Christianity exhibits a God of *infinite perfection*.

It is true indeed that Paganism recognises the existence of one Supreme Deity, who is uncreated and eter-



nal. But it is also true that she attributes to him a character which renders a belief in his existence a mere unimportant speculation. She supposes him to be unchangeable and omnipotent, but without affections and without happiness. She regards him as having had no direct agency in the work of creation, and as exercising no superintendence or controul over the course of events. Mean while the creation and government of the world are attributed to inferior deities, who are chiefly the objects of religious worship, and who are supposed to reside in almost all the forms of animate and inanimate existence.

It is not easy to fasten upon any object except the true God himself, or any quality apart from his infinite perfections, on which Paganism has not, at some time or other, bestowed the honours of Divinity. The objects which she seems first to have deified were the sun, moon, and stars; owing no doubt to the extensive and propitious influence which these heavenly bodies were perceived to exert upon the world. Next in order probably were the spirits of the illustrious dead;—men who had been regarded during their lives as public benefactors. And when the principle of Polytheism once became established, it was natural that men should select their deities according to the dictates of hope, or fear, or fancy, or any other feeling which might happen to predominate. Hence we find that divine honours were rendered to whatever was found to be of great utility; to various qualities and conditions of human beings,—such as Fidelity, Safety, Liberty, Concord, and Victory; to the bad passions and vices, on the ground that these exert a powerful influence on human conduct; and finally to the prowling beast, to the ravenous bird, to the venomous reptile, and even to the contemptible insect. Indeed it

has been conceded by an eminent writer whose object was to compliment Paganism at the expense of Revelation, that "the Gentiles not only worshipped the whole world taken together, but its parts, yea, even its particles or small parts; thinking it unbecoming that some of the most minute parts of him, whom they regarded as God, should be worshipped, and other parts neglected."

Most of their celestial deities, which were the principal objects of their worship, had once been men; and to many of them, not excepting Jupiter himself, are attributed the most degrading vices. They are represented, sometimes in the most trifling and ridiculous attitude; sometimes as yielding to excessive anger and engaged in desperate quarrels; sometimes as corroded by envy or jealousy, and laying plans to defeat each other's purposes; and even the best of them are exhibited with failings which may well lead us to wonder, not only that they should have been worshipped as gods, but that they should have been more than tolerated as men.

Nor has Paganism improved in respect to the character of her gods, in modern times. The Indians of our own wilderness are perhaps less debased in respect to the objects of their worship than any other portion of the Pagan world; and yet it has been asserted on good authority, that even they not only worship the great Spirit of evil, and the luminaries of heaven, but that many of them imagine the deity to have his residence in animals, and even in reptiles. But the Eastern nations exceed even the ancient Pagans in respect to the disgusting character of their idols. There is no combination of matter so loathsome, no form of vice so degrading, nothing within the range of the human imagination so monstrous, but that it is enthroned, in some form or other, as an object of homage.

How delightful to turn from a contemplation of the character of Pagan deities to a view of the Christian's God! In *his* character there is no weakness nor darkness, nothing to mar, or to degrade, or to constitute the least spot in a blaze of perfect glory. The gods of the heathen see not, hear not, understand not; but *our* God has his eye open upon every object, his ear open to every whisper, and there is nothing that ever has occurred, or ever can occur, but is distinctly within his knowledge. The gods of the heathen are most of them formed of corruptible matter, and all of them occupy a limited space; but our God is a spirit, and his presence fills immensity. The gods of the heathen have no power to help those who call upon them in the day of trouble; but our God has treasures of consolation which are inexhaustible. The gods of the heathen are many of them in their nature grovelling and contemptible; and none of them possess any other than a borrowed glory; but Jehovah our God is clothed with majesty as with a garment, and is so pure that the Heavens are not clean in his sight. The gods of the heathen perish; the Christian's God lives and reigns forever and ever.

3. Paganism presents at best a *confused and inconsistent view of Providence*: Christianity pours upon it a *clear and satisfying light*.

Most of the ancient heathen seem to have had some notion of a superior Power, superintending and guiding the concerns of the creation; and this notion was carefully encouraged and cherished by the ablest politicians, from their perceiving how intimately it was connected with good order, and whatever else could minister to the best interests of society. But of course the view which would be held of this subject would be modified by the view which should be taken of the divine existence and

character; and just in proportion as the number of deities increased, and their character became degenerate, we find that their notions of a Providence became nugatory and absurd. In strict accordance with the doctrine of Polytheism, they imagined the government of the world not to be administered by any one being, but to be distributed among numerous gods and goddesses, each of whom had, in some sense, a distinct and independent dominion. But the principal agency, in the controul of events, they attributed to Fortune, whom they regarded as a blind, capricious and inconstant deity, often frowning upon the good, and as often favouring the unworthy. They believed, moreover, that Providence was concerned only in regulating the external circumstances of our condition; and hence, while they applied to the gods for riches, and health, and worldly prosperity, they never thought of supplicating them for intellectual or moral endowments. And finally, they recognised the controuling agency of evil spirits; for they offered sacrifices to them with a view to obtain their favour, and secure themselves against their malignant influence.

And if such were the notions of the *mass* of the heathen world in respect to this subject, what better can be said of the views which were held by their *philosophers*? Not a small part of them rejected the idea of a Providence altogether; and others regarded it with extreme uncertainty. The Epicureans, though they acknowledged the existence of the gods, maintained that they did not concern themselves at all with the affairs of men. Cicero, in one of his most splendid productions, represents it as one of the great questions among the philosophers, whether the gods existed in a state of indifference and repose, or whether they were active in the regulation of human concerns; and he introduces a disciple of Epi-



curus to ridicule the doctrine of Providence, and a disciple of the Academic school, to assail it with all the force of reasoning and eloquence. The great historian, Tacitus, speaks of the doctrine at best in a doubtful manner. Pliny, the celebrated naturalist, treats it as absolutely ridiculous. And Cæcilius, a learned Roman lawyer, urges as a serious objection against the Christians, that this doctrine is received by them.

But while many of the philosophers doubted, or actually disbelieved, the doctrine of a Providence, those by whom it was professedly received, had, at best, but imperfect views of it. There were some who admitted it in reference to great and heavenly things, who denied that it had any application to the concerns of this world. Others regarded it as concerned in a general manner with the affairs both of Heaven and of earth, but as not being sufficiently particular to extend to individuals.—Others still, and among them Socrates and Plato, believed that it was in the highest degree particular; but then they supposed this universal dominion to be vested in the stars; and hence they speak of those who do not believe the heavenly bodies are animated, as tending to Atheism. In short, those who approached nearest to the truth on this subject, were still in bondage to monstrous error.

It would be easy to show, by a reference to the history of modern Paganism, that the views of the heathen nations respecting Providence have not grown more clear or more correct from the lapse of ages. Every Pagan nation on earth, at this moment, is in deep darkness on this subject; and where any intelligent agency in the government of the world is acknowledged, the idea is yet so encumbered and neutralized by error, as to render it only better than absolute Atheism.



Let me relieve you now by directing your attention to the doctrine of Providence, as it is inculcated by Christianity. And I need only say that it is, in every respect, worthy of the God whose character she reveals. It is an intelligent agency;—the agency of a mind whose comprehension is infinite. It is a universal and particular agency; reaching as well to the motion of an atom as the revolution of a globe, to the condition of a worm as the destiny of a seraph. It is a wise and benevolent agency; forming the best purposes, devising the best means, securing the best results. It is an agency which surrounds and guards me every where; which sustains and blesses me every moment; which constitutes my security against danger, my refuge in trouble, and the pillow upon which I would lay my head when I come to die. Surely all that Paganism has ever conjectured on this subject, when compared with the sublime doctrine which Christianity inculcates, is scarcely better than a dream of delirium.

4. *Paganism draws a cloud over the soul's immortality; Christianity gloriously illustrates it.*

If we are to look for any thing approaching a correct view of this subject from any portion of the Pagan world, doubtless it is from the philosophers of antiquity;—the men whom history has emblazoned, as having done something to enlighten the world during the long night which preceded the dawn of Christianity. And what are the facts? Why that not a small number of the very master spirits of that period held the soul's immortality to be a mere dream of imagination; and inculcated with great zeal and confidence the doctrine that death terminates man's conscious existence. There were whole sects of philosophers, such as the followers of Democritus, the Cynics, the widely extended sect of the

Epicureans, and many of the Peripatetics, who regarded the doctrine of a future existence as a vulgar error, fit only for the unthinking multitude. In this large class of unbelievers must also be included Aristotle, the greatest perhaps of all the philosophers, and Confucius, the celebrated Chinese philosopher ; both of whom had large classes of followers, and exercised an almost unlimited influence.

But there were others, and men of illustrious name, who acknowledged and taught the soul's immortality. Of these, the most distinguished were Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato and Cicero. But while they inculcated the doctrine, they placed it on wrong foundations, and connected with it other things which were adapted to weaken the belief of it. Instead of suffering it to rest on the ground which Reason suggests, viz., that man is an accountable being, and that there *must* be a future life to furnish an opportunity for a retribution, they inferred it from the doctrine which they universally received, of the soul's pre-existence ; and some of them from the equally absurd doctrine that the soul is a portion of the divine essence. Not one of them all, so far as it appears, had ever dreamed of the resurrection of the body ; and hence, in order to get over the difficulty which death threw in their way, they were obliged to maintain that the body constitutes no part of the man. They moreover held the doctrine of the transmigration of souls from one body to another ;—a doctrine which it would be easy enough to receive when the pre-existence of the soul was once admitted ; for if they could believe that their souls had existed before they animated their present bodies, they might as easily believe that, when they had left these bodies, they would pass into others. But it is easy to see that this scheme furnished no rational ground for a

retribution ; for as the soul is supposed to have no recollection, in each succeeding body, of any previous actions it may have performed, or any previous events which may have occurred to it, so it could not be said in any proper sense to be rewarded or punished for that of which it had no consciousness. And to crown all, the most strenuous advocates for the immortality of the soul did not pretend to any thing like certainty respecting it ; and before the time of our Saviour's advent, the great mass, especially of the two most enlightened nations on earth, had discarded it altogether.

It is the glorious prerogative of Christianity that she has brought life and immortality to light. She has cleared away the thick mists of philosophical speculation which had been gathering around this doctrine for ages. She assures man that the native longings of his own spirit have not deceived him. The darkness that had hung over the tomb for centuries, at her approach, flew away ; and as she entered its iron gates, and cast her angelick smile around upon its cold and slumbering tenants, she said in the language of her native Heavens, ' Let there be life ;' and in the resurrection of her glorious Author, she has given the pledge that ere long there *shall* be life, and even that most dreaded of all kings, the king of terrors, shall go into an ignominious and everlasting captivity.

5. Paganism connects man's acceptance with God with a course of devout austerity, or of self inflicted torture : Christianity connects it with living faith in the atonement of the Son of God.

Paganism, as well as Christianity, takes for granted that man is a sinner ; and in every part of her ritual you meet with something designed to propitiate an offended deity. Take, for instance, the Hindoo religion

as it exists at the present day; and you will find that a large part of its ceremonies point, either directly or indirectly, to the existence of human guilt. What mean the ablutions in the Ganges of which we have heard so much, if they do not indicate the conviction that there is a moral stain upon the soul? What mean the frequent and laborious acts of penance, the long and tedious pilgrimages voluntarily undertaken and patiently prosecuted, the keenest torture which nature can bear, self inflicted and often repeated, if it be not all designed to propitiate some real or imaginary being, who is supposed to have the controul of human destiny? Yes, my friends, in all these ceremonies, nature is acknowledging the humiliating fact of human depravity; and these are the means which Paganism prescribes for obtaining the divine forgiveness and restoring the soul to its purity.

But how different in this respect is our blessed Christianity! She too contemplates human guilt in all its blackness: She sees man moving onward to the chambers of everlasting wo. And she lifts up her voice and warns him of his ruin: but at the same time she announces to him that his case is not desperate; that salvation is within his reach, if he will comply with the terms on which it is offered. But she imposes on him no penance. She sends him on no pilgrimage. She requires not a single drop of his blood. She points him away to Calvary; and in the agonies which were there endured she bids him contemplate the only foundation of hope for ruined man. She repeats that gracious direction and assurance, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." He *does* believe, and he has the witness within that he *is* saved; for the joys of a good hope through grace are already springing



up in his bosom. The poor Pagan has performed his pilgrimages, and endured his tortures, year after year, and yet the nestlings of guilt disturb him as much as ever; but this disciple of Christianity has no sooner taken from her his first lesson, and obeyed her first direction, than his conscience has ceased its tormenting work, and the future has opened upon him in the brightness of an unclouded day.

II. The second point of contrast between the two systems relates to the **WORSHIP** which they respectively enjoin. And this, of course, must derive its complexion, in a great degree, from the character of the objects to which it is directed.

1. The worship which Paganism prescribes is a mere matter of *external ceremony*: that which Christianity requires is *intelligent* and *spiritual*.

In the worship enjoined by Paganism there is not one of all the elements of an enlightened devotion. There is no reverent acknowledgment of the divine perfections; no penitent confession of guilt; no expression of gratitude for mercies; no devout supplication that any wants may be supplied, or any sins may be forgiven. On the contrary, (I here speak more particularly of the Hindoo worship,) it consists in fixing the eye intensely upon the idol, in indistinctly muttering a few words, in saluting the image by bringing both hands to the forehead, and then slowly and solemnly bowing the head. In other cases, it consists in bowing to the very feet of the goddess, and then walking around her with other worshippers in a continual and unbroken circle. In other cases still, it consists in throwing upon the image little offerings of rice and flowers. I need not say that I have alluded here only to the more decent rites of the Hindoo worship; but even in respect to these, you cannot fail to



perceive that there is nothing to call into exercise the understanding. The gods whom they worship are material; and the homage which they render is worthy of the objects to which it is directed.

In the worship which Christianity prescribes, the soul is principally, and in a sense solely, concerned; for bodily postures are unimportant, except as they have an influence upon the inner man. The Christian in his devotions holds communion with a Being of infinite intelligence; and surely in such an exercise there is reason enough why his own intellect should be kept wakeful and vigorous. And then again, in every act of worship he performs,—whether he adores the divine perfections, or deprecates the divine wrath; whether he renders thanksgiving in view of the past, or offers supplication in reference to the future, it is a deeply spiritual exercise in which he is engaged; and if the spirit is not in it, he stands chargeable before God with base hypocrisy. The god whom the Pagan worships, is an imaginary being of limited attributes, who is supposed to have his residence in an image of clay: the Christian's God is an infinite Spirit, who, though he condescends to dwell in temples made with hands, fills immensity with his presence. The Pagan may well enough satisfy himself with offering to *his* god the mere homage of the lips, or the hands, or the body; but the Christian can never think of approaching Jehovah with any other than an intelligent offering. The Pagan cannot perform his worship without standing before his idol: the Christian may perform his, standing any where in the universe.

2. The worship which Paganism prescribes is grossly *absurd*: that which Christianity requires is a *reasonable* service.

The former stands chargeable with absurdity in respect to the *objects* to which it is directed. For it is contrary to the dictates of right reason to worship *any* being, even the most intelligent and the most pure, who is not possessed of infinite perfection. If it were the highest angel in Heaven before whom the Pagan was accustomed to bow in acts of religious homage, reason would rebuke him for the idolatry; because the highest angel is not possessed of attributes which entitle him to such homage; and besides, he can do nothing for man but what it is given him to do by the Being to whom angels and men alike owe their existence; and more than all, no intimation has ever come from above, none has ever been given by well directed reason, that an angel in Heaven could hear the supplications which might go up from the earth. But if it were absurd to worship even an angel, how much more absurd to render religious homage to a piece of senseless clay, moulded into any form which human fancy or human folly may dictate! Can a piece of clay be moved to compassion by any religious rites with which I may approach it? Can a piece of clay just like that which I walk upon from day to day, answer my request, or help me when I am in trouble? But the Pagan tells me that it is not the image that he worships; that that is only the residence of an invisible deity; and that the dwelling does not become divinely inhabited till the idol is consecrated? I answer, it is an outrage upon reason to suppose that man should have the power of attracting any invisible being, especially to so uninviting a residence, by going through with an unmeaning and ridiculous ceremony. I answer, yet again, it is absurd to suppose that any such invisible deities exist; and if it were admitted that they do, it would still be absurd to invoke their aid in any thing; for not one

of them is supposed, even by the heathen themselves, to be omniscient or almighty ; and many of them possess a character the most malignant and abominable.

But laying out of view the character of the gods, the worship *itself* is a mere tissue of absurdity. I have already shown you that the intellect is completely divorced from it ; that even, in its least revolting forms, it consists of ceremonies which would not be worthy to furnish sport for children. And is that Power which controuls my destiny to be worshipped by looking intensely at an image ; by bowing before it, or walking around it, or covering it with flowers ? The maniac's dream could not be more preposterous or revolting than such a supposition.

But in the worship which Christianity enjoins, every thing is in accordance with the purest dictates of reason. The object of worship which she presents, though infinitely above the comprehension of reason, is yet just such a Being as reason sees to be worthy of man's highest homage. And as to the worship itself—can any thing be more reasonable ? Is it not reasonable to adore an infinitely perfect Being ? Is it not reasonable to offer thanksgiving to an all gracious Benefactor ? Is it not reasonable to offer confessions, if we know we have offended him ? Is it not reasonable to offer supplications, if we know we are dependant upon him ? Is it not reasonable to worship him in simplicity, if he is a heart searching God ? Is it not reasonable to worship him in temples made with hands, if he holds his peculiar residence there ? Is it not reasonable to worship him any where, if his presence fills immensity ? If it be so, then, I say again, the worship which Christianity prescribes is a reasonable service.

3. The worship which Paganism prescribes brings into exercise the *worst* affections of the heart: that which Christianity requires appeals directly to its *best* affections.

I was about to ask you here to excuse me for not descending to particulars; but I might perhaps more reasonably ask you to excuse me if I should; not only because I should thereby be carried much farther than I could hope your patience would accompany me, but because I should be carried into a field which it would be any thing else than grateful to us to explore. I shall dismiss this topic therefore with a remark or two. I will only say that, wherever idolatry has prevailed, the objects of worship have always been, in a greater or less degree, sensual or sanguinary; and the rites with which they have been worshipped have been adapted to their character;—rites which have caused the altars to smoke with human blood, or which have caused Purity, even Decency, to retire and weep. And is it possible, think you, for man to commune, even in imagination, with such gods as these, and through the medium of such rites as these, without having the most unhallowed, the most malignant, passions wakened into exercise? Is it possible to sacrifice to a being whose delight is supposed to be in human blood, without becoming cruel; or to a being who has his element in the very filth of sensuality, without becoming impure?

I turn to Christianity, and here I find a Being, every attribute of whose character appeals to my best affections. Here is infinite power to protect, infinite wisdom to guide, infinite love, and condescension, and faithfulness, to save;—every thing to awaken reverence, confidence, gratitude and love. And the rites of Christian worship—how simple, how touching, how sublime!—

Take, for instance, the ordinance of the Supper ; and see how it is fitted to dissolve the heart in thankfulness, to elevate it in adoration, to inspire it with benevolence, as it feels itself sweetly attracted—I had almost said divinely enchained, to the cross of Christ. And I may appeal to every true disciple for evidence that every act of sincere worship which he performs contributes to the exercise and the growth of his best affections. It lessens his attachment to what is earthly and grovelling, and strengthens his aspirations for the pure and exalted joys of Heaven.

III. It only remains, in the third place, to contemplate the contrast between the two systems, in regard to the MORALITY which they respectively produce.

1. Paganism furnishes *no adequate rule of morals* : Christianity prescribes one that is *clear, certain, authoritative*.

A complete rule of morals must include the whole range of human duty ;—the duties which we owe to God, to our fellow men, and to ourselves. Now if Paganism has prescribed any such rule, doubtless we are to look for it, either in her religious precepts, in her civil laws, or in the instructions of her philosophers. But do we find it in the precepts of her religion ? Surely not ; for her religion had no respect to morality ; nor was it any part of the office of her priests to inculcate lessons of virtue. Do we find it in her code of civil laws ? Certainly not ; for though many of her laws evince great wisdom, and were happily adapted to the end they were designed to answer, yet they did not even pretend to reach beyond the external conduct ; and besides, many of them were at war with the first principles of morality, and justified practices which Nature views with shuddering. Witness the celebrated law of Romulus, which



was confirmed by a constitution of the twelve tables, allowing parents to destroy all their female children except the eldest; and even their male children, if they happened to be diseased or deformed. But if neither her religious precepts, nor her civil laws, furnish any thing which approximates to a perfect standard of morality, may we not find it in the instructions of her philosophers? Here again, the answer must be in the negative; for though it is acknowledged that her philosophers have uttered many fine moral sentiments, and were doubtless, in this respect, of important use at the period in which they lived, yet it would be impossible to extract from the writings of all of them combined, a complete system of moral virtue. They were wrong in the very first principles of morals, and recognised no other distinction between virtue and vice, than is founded in human law and custom. In relation to the duties which they owed to God, their notions were exceedingly contradictory and erroneous; in respect to the duties which they owed to each other, they were miserably lax, pleading in favour of revenge, and regarding forgiveness of injuries as a weakness; and in regard to self-government, they either allowed a complete dominion to the sensual appetites and passions, or at least required less restraint than was consistent with the strictness and dignity of virtue. Even the Stoics, who were undoubtedly the most eminent teachers of morals in the Pagan world, held a scheme which was fitted to lessen, if not annihilate, the fear of God; to root out the kind and tender affections of human nature, and to encourage that most unnatural of all crimes—self-murder.

But admitting that the moral systems of the philosophers had been far better than they were,—admitting even that they had recognised a perfect rule of duty,—

that rule would still have lacked what would have been necessary to give it efficiency,—I mean *adequate sanctions*. They held indeed that law was right Reason; but Reason without a higher authority cannot enforce man's obligation. Some of them talked much of the beauty and excellence of virtue; but what power would there be in such speculations to withstand the force of unbridled passion? They even had their Elysian fields and their Tartarean gulf; but the rewards and punishments proposed in connexion with these were but of temporary duration; and after all, they are to be regarded rather as the dream of the poets, than the doctrine of the philosophers. I say then, with confidence, Paganism, even where she has been aided by the highest degree of intellectual culture, has not been able to propose a correct standard of morals; and even that which she *has* proposed, has been without any adequate authority.

Need I say that Christianity *does* supply a rule of morals in every respect adequate to the necessity of the case? Man needs a rule which shall reach beyond the external conduct to the heart, and controul its most secret operations. Christianity furnishes that rule in the law of God. Man needs a rule which shall be so clear that he can apply it at all times, and on the most sudden emergencies. Here again, his case is met by Christianity; for while she reveals to him God's law in its most simple and comprehensive form, she furnishes the most complete comment on that law in the instructions and example of the Saviour of the world. Indeed, if you suppose man to be in a wilderness from which every ray of light is excluded in respect to moral duty, you have only to put the Bible into his hands, to enable him to walk any where with confidence and safety.

2. Paganism consecrates immorality by incorporating it with her religious rites: Christianity, by the purity of her institutions, frowns upon every form of immorality.

It were well if Paganism did nothing more than wink at vice, or even directly sanction it by the doctrines and precepts of her philosophers; but she has actually incorporated it among the elements of her existence, so that to be religious upon her principles is nothing less than to be corrupt. Religion consists in obeying what is supposed to be the will of the gods. But it is supposed to be the will of some of the gods that they should be served by acts of the grossest pollution, or by offerings of human blood. Tell me then how the obligations of religion are here to be met, except by violating some of the first laws of morality. And so it is that Paganism substitutes darkness for light, vice for virtue; she not only endeavours to annihilate the natural sense of guilt attendant on crime, but she actually prescribes immorality as an antidote to guilt; for she maintains that it is by this means that the favour of the gods is to be secured. Think of a man outraging the first laws of nature, and not only calling, but believing, it religious worship; and say whether the system of which this is a part must not be the very master piece of human corruption.

Christianity too has her institutions, but, like her nature, they are pure; and their tendency is to purify all who come within their influence. Is there not that in the ordinary rites of Christian worship which seems to bring the soul into an atmosphere of moral purity? In drawing reverently near to the throne of grace, is there not something which is fitted to rebuke even a sinful thought, and to give the spirit an upward tendency? Is not the dispensation of the word adapted to check the

growth of sin, to promote the growth of holiness? Does not the baptism by water impressively tell of the need of the baptism by the Holy Ghost? Do not the cup which we bless, and the bread which we break, in the sacramental supper, warn us against sin, by pointing us to the sacrifice which has been made for its expiation? In one word, is there any thing in the rites of Christian worship that does not point to the crucifixion of sin? Is there any thing in the rites of Pagan worship that does not point to the indulgence of sin?

3. The *actual results* of Paganism are to be seen *in every species of iniquity and crime*; while the *fruits* of Christianity appear *in whatever is pure, and lovely, and honest, and of good report*.

If you will know from the best authority what was the moral condition of the most celebrated Pagan nations of antiquity, and at the period too when they were illumined by the brightest blaze of intellectual glory, read the chapter from which my text is taken; and I venture to say that you cannot find any where a blacker catalogue of vices than is there contained. And the testimony of Paul on this subject is seconded by the voice of all antiquity. Shall I refer you to the brutal cruelty which both the Greeks and Romans exercised towards their slaves; not only punishing old age and infirmity with death, but with death in some of its most horrid forms? Shall I remind you of the gladiatorial shows, which attracted immense numbers not only of men but women, to witness death as a mere matter of amusement; scenes in which human life was sacrificed with greater prodigality than even in war, and at the very description of which the blood sets back with horror? Shall I tell you that even the philosophers of Greece and Rome—the very men whose business it was to inculcate lessons



of morality, were themselves, to a great extent, examples of flagrant crime? And descending from ancient to modern times, you surely need not be told that Paganism has lost none of her disgusting or appalling features by age. To say nothing of the abominable practices which still exist among some of our tribes of Indians, you cannot look over the Eastern nations; but your eye will affect your heart. There you may see fraud and falsehood, revenge and murder, every thing base and every thing cruel, flourishing with a deadly luxuriance. There you may see the helpless infant thrown from a mother's arms into the deep, to be devoured alive by the monsters which sport there. There you may see, or might lately have seen, the widow burning on the funeral pile of her husband, the fatal fires having been kindled by her own children. There you may see the aged father forced into the grave while the breath has not yet left him, by the hand of an inhuman son. Indeed, you may conceive of whatever vice or crime you please, and somewhere in the dominions of Paganism, you will find the horrible reality.

And now in speaking of the moral effects of Christianity, as they are displayed in the character of communities, I am aware that I cannot do full justice to her benign, and lovely, and regenerating tendencies; for this obvious reason, that no extensive community has ever yet existed in which she has been permitted to exert, to the full extent, her legitimate influence. But notwithstanding this, I am sure you cannot compare the moral condition of any Christian country, especially of any Protestant country, with that of the most enlightened Pagan nation, without being led to exclaim that a greater and better than Paganism is here! What but Christianity has disarmed man of an unkindly and savage



spirit, and converted his bosom into a dwelling place for the amiable and generous affections? What but Christianity has meliorated the condition of slaves, or actually abolished slavery; has diminished the horrors of war; has elevated the intellectual as well as moral condition of the female sex; has wakened into exercise the spirit of benevolent action, and diffused over the whole face of society the soft charities of domestic life? What but Christianity has gone out in pursuit of the starving orphan and provided for him a home; has administered comfort to the prisoner in his dungeon, has given a crutch to trembling old age, and caused the heart of the sick and destitute widow to sing for joy? Whence have originated all the benevolent institutions of modern times,—the infirmaries, the hospitals, the lazarettos, which lie scattered over the Christian world as so many points of glory, but in the purifying and elevating influence of our blessed religion? I bless Christianity that she has done so much; and it is not her own fault, but the fault of those who would not have her to reign over them, that she has not, in a still higher degree, changed the wilderness into a garden.

In review of our subject, we remark,

1. *How deplorable is the condition of the Pagan world!*

They have perverted every fundamental truth of religion and every great principle of morality. Do you ask them respecting the *object* of their worship? They point you to their idols, upon every high hill and under every green tree. Do you inquire concerning the *nature* of their worship? They answer you by bidding you look at altars stained with human blood. Do you ask them by what agency the world is governed? They have no answer to give, but what is either borrowed di-

rectly from Atheism, or at best built upon gross absurdity. Ask you concerning their standard for the regulation of human conduct? They have none which is not as variable as human caprice can dictate; as grovelling as human corruption can desire. Do you question them concerning the future? Do you ask whether any light breaks from their system of religion upon the tomb? Ah, that is with them emphatically a region of darkness; for even their philosophy halts at the question whether there is any passage that connects the tomb with a world beyond it. I ask that intelligent Pagan, that philosopher if you please, on his dying bed, what are the prospects which open upon him: and he tells me that his mind is bewildered with doubt and haunted with horror; that the gods whom he has worshipped are not present to help him in the hour of his extremity; that he must plunge into the future, and be satisfied with what the future may have in store for him.

Methinks I hear some one say, 'This is indeed a wretched condition for the poor Pagan; but then death brings him out of it, and introduces him to a perfectly happy existence.' But I ask you upon what authority you say this? Surely not upon the authority of Paul; for he has "concluded *all* under sin," and has declared that "the wages of sin is death." But do you say that it were an unworthy reflection upon God's justice to suppose that they who have not known his character and will, should suffer the penalty of his law? I reply, God is a better judge of what is right and just than we are; and we have his own word for it that the heathen are "under sin," or obnoxious to punishment. I answer farther, that this objection would convert the gospel into the greatest curse that was ever inflicted upon the world; for if those who have no revelation are not guilty, then

what is the revelation better than a minister of condemnation? I reply yet again, that an Apostle has pronounced the ignorance of the heathen inexcusable; not because they have not improved light which they never enjoyed, but because they have abused light which they *have* enjoyed; because they have not seen “the invisible things” of God, when they *might* be “understood by the things that are made.” Do you inquire then whether I mean to assert that all who live and die in Pagan darkness are lost? I answer, by no means. I am willing to hope that there may be those, even where no ray of evangelical light has ever fallen, on whom the Spirit may, in some mysterious way, have performed his regenerating work. But in respect to all who die in the guilt and pollution of Heathenism, (and they who have sojourned in Pagan lands will tell you that they have known few, if any, who have not evidently belonged to this class,) I know not where to look for a ray of hope; and in coming to this appalling conclusion, I beg you will remember that it is not I who assert it, but the Holy Ghost.

2. Our subject teaches us that *there is no reason to hope for any favourable change in the state of the heathen world from the efforts of unassisted Reason.*

For what more, I ask, could Reason do to enlighten and reform than she has done already? If her efforts had been made only in regions which were overrun with barbarism, and in circumstances in which her energies could not be fairly tried; if, for instance, it had been left to the savages of our Western wilderness, or to the degraded inhabitants of Otaheite, to undertake the great work of the illumination and regeneration of the world; there might still be some reason to hope that, after *they* had done their utmost, some intellectual sun might yet

rise upon the world with healing in his beams ;—some genius might break forth, of nobler capacities, and under more favourable circumstances, than any which had gone before, and bring light, and order, and purity, out of the wild chaos of Paganism. But surely no such expectation can be indulged in view of the fact that genius and philosophy have already tasked themselves to the utmost to perform this very work, and yet the whole work remains to be done. Testify for me, ye sages of antiquity, who have been to the period in which you lived, like a few solitary stars scattered here and there about the heavens in a dark night ;—testify for me, Socrates and Cicero, Plato and Seneca, that ye did your utmost to bring the world under the dominion of truth, but that it still remained in bondage to error ; nay, that your own minds were bewildered with doubt, and that your own systems had in them more of beautiful speculation than of regenerating power ! And if the efforts of those mighty minds whose productions have ever been the admiration of the world, were to no purpose, is it not preposterous to expect more from the less enlightened Pagans of the present day ? And is there the shadow of reason to believe that the heathen world will have brighter lights of its own to shine upon it hereafter, than it has had already ? Rely on it, the powers of Reason have been tested most thoroughly, and Reason has shown herself a blind guide ; and unless a Higher Power comes to the aid of the Pagan world, they must grope onward in the same deep darkness which has hung around them for ages.

3. The subject *commends to our special regard the cause of foreign missions.*

For in this cause, you perceive, is bound up the only hope of the Pagan world. All experience has proved

that it is by the gospel only they can be enlightened and reformed ; and if the gospel is to be sent to them, it must be by human means ; and it is to provide these means,—in other words, to send forth men with the words of eternal life upon their lips, and the charter of salvation in their hands, into the wide waste of Paganism, that constitutes the great object of the Foreign Missionary enterprise. And who will say that there is any thing in this that looks chimerical ? There is nothing more chimerical in it than there is in providing relief for the orphan who comes half starved and shivering to beg at your door. But do you say that the orphan stands before your eyes, and appeals to your sensibilities by his wretchedness and his tears ; whereas the heathen are most of them at an immense distance from you, and have not even asked the aid of your charity ? And what then ? Is not their condition just as wretched, are not their prospects just as dismal, as if they were in the midst of you ? Nay, is it not one of the circumstances which contribute to the wretchedness of their condition, that they are so far out of the reach of ordinary christian influence, that they are in danger of living and dying as they are, without any effort being made to enlighten and save them ? And besides, suppose they have not lifted up their imploring voice to supplicate your aid, what else does this indicate than that they are pleased with their own wretched and fatal delusions, just as the maniac exults in the wild fancies of delirium ; and I ask whether this, instead of being a reason for doing nothing in their behalf, is not an additional reason for awaking to vigorous, benevolent effort ? Do I hear you still repeat the objection that they are too far off ? But they are just as truly your brethren, as if you and they were living in the bosom of the same society. Yes, though they have a dif-



ferent language, and have been educated to different habits, and have been conversant with different religious rites, and indeed have scarcely any thing in common with you but human nature, still they and you belong to the same great family ; and you cannot neglect them but at the expense of incurring his displeasure, who hath said, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." Put thyself, for once, in that Pagan's stead ; and imagine the darkness that rests upon his prospects to rest upon thine, and the debasement and wretchedness which enter into his lot to be the leading elements in thine own ; imagine thyself educated under Pagan influences, and bound with the cords of Pagan superstition, and looking forward with suspense and horror to a Pagan's grave ; and then say what ought to be the measure of thy brother's charity toward thee ; and let the answer which conscience dictates guide thee in respect to thy duty towards him. I repeat, he *is* thy brother, though the ocean rolls between him and thee ; and though he shall never meet thee on earth, yet if, through thy neglect, he is left to perish, take heed lest he should meet thee in the judgment as thine accuser.

Finally : In the prevalence of Christianity and Paganism on the earth, we may contemplate *the great conflict which is going forward between the kingdom of darkness and the kingdom of light.*

This world is yet, to a great extent, the theatre of the empire of darkness. The great adversary of God and man, of truth and righteousness, has established his reign here, and is determined to hold it as long as he can. He exercises his dominion over every unsanctified heart. But it is in the territories of Paganism that he reigns with the most absolute sway. In the thick dark-

ness that prevails there he finds his peculiar element; for he is, by way of eminence, the prince of darkness. In the gross depravity that prevails there, he takes a malignant pleasure; for he is the deadly enemy of all righteousness. On the bloody altars which are reared there, on the idol gods which abound there, on the superstitious rites which are performed there, he looks and smiles with malignant exultation. And he is jealous of any inroads which are made upon his dominion. And yet such inroads *are* made, and will continue to be made, till the last inch of his territories is wrested from him. In the more earnest prayers and the more vigorous movements of the friends of missions, I see the preparation going forward for a more desperate onset upon this enemy of all good; and I read in the aspects of Providence, as well as in the word of God, that he is destined to an ignoble and entire defeat. Messiah, with all his mighty forces, is marching up to encounter him; and as sure as God's testimony can be relied on, he shall ere long lick the dust. That thick darkness shall all fly away. Those bloody altars shall all be broken down. Those idol gods shall become the property of the moles and the bats. Paganism shall have abdicated her last throne; shall have yielded in her last conflict; shall have felt the arm of her power wither, and the blood at her heart curdle; and shall not be able to find a place, even in the caves and dens of the earth, which she can call her own.

And then, ever blessed Christianity, how welcome will be thy reign among the nations! How bright will be thy glory, as it will serenely lay itself upon the bosom of the world! How lovely, how transporting, how endlessly diversified, will be the forms of moral excellence, which will rise every where under thy new creating

hand, to greet the regenerated vision of man ! I fasten my eye upon thee, and anticipate with rapture that jubilee of the world. Thou hast come up from the conflict of ages amidst the songs of victory ! Thou hast all the nations at thy feet in token of thy gracious triumph ! Let inanimate nature become vocal to welcome thy reign ! Let rocks, hills, and mountains, welcome thee ! Let oceans, rivers, and forests, welcome thee ! Let the Heavens which look down upon us in their glory, welcome thee ! Let universal nature break forth in one thrilling and rapturous shout of triumph, that the empire of light, and grace, and love, has become universal ; that there was no darkness so deep but that it has fled away before the quickening beams of the Sun of Righteousness !

## LECTURE III.

### CHRISTIANITY CONTRASTED WITH DEISM.

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ROMANS I. 16.

*I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ.*

IN CONNEXION WITH

JOHN VII. 12.

*Others said, nay; but he deceiveth the people.*

When our blessed Lord came to his own, his own received him not. Notwithstanding he spake as never man spake, and performed works which showed that he was in intimate communion with Omnipotence, the great mass of his countrymen contrived to evade the evidence of his Messiahship; and not only refused to heed his instructions and acknowledge his claims, but openly accused him of being a deceiver of the people. And the same spirit which was manifested towards the great Founder of our Religion, has been acted out, in every succeeding age, towards the religion he came to establish: there have always been those who have regarded Christianity as a cunningly devised fable; who have maintained that the only light which Heaven ever vouchsafed to man was the light of Reason; and that

every thing beyond this is alike incredible and unnecessary. While they profess to hold certain great principles which they denominate Natural Religion, but which, in many instances, are only a wretched perversion of it, their zeal is chiefly exhausted in a warfare against Christianity; as if she were not only the declared enemy of the Religion of Nature, but the enemy of every thing that involves the happiness of man. I need not tell you that the class to which I here refer are the Deists.— Though they differ not a little among themselves, some of them professedly holding the truths of Natural Religion in a good degree of purity, and others holding doctrines which verge closely upon Atheism, yet the mass of them would agree with the Jews in saying of our blessed Lord, that he is a deceiver of the people; and of his gospel, that it is a system of imposture.

Lend me your attention then, while I consider the base charge of the Jews against our Lord, in connexion with the triumphant declaration of the Apostle respecting his gospel, as suggesting *the contrast between Deism and Christianity*. We will contrast the two systems in respect to

- I. THE EXTENT OF THEIR DISCOVERIES :
- II. THE CERTAINTY OF THEIR EVIDENCE :
- III. THE ENERGY OF THEIR OPERATIONS :
- IV. THE CHARACTER OF THEIR RESULTS.

#### I. THE EXTENT OF THEIR DISCOVERIES.

As Deism claims that human Reason is a sufficient guide in matters of religion, it is fair to judge of the powers of Reason by what she has actually accomplished. And that we may ascertain this, we must look, not to those systems the materials of which Deists have pilfered, in a great measure, from Christianity, and which they



have proudly held forth to the world as the product of human Reason ; but to those systems which have been formed where Reason has been left to do her work alone. You remember the results to which we were brought in our last discourse, in respect to the most enlightened Pagan nations of antiquity : we saw how the greatest minds were bewildered in respect to the very first truths of religion ;—how Socrates and Cicero, Plato and Seneca, with all their intellectual greatness, were mere babes in religious knowledge ; how the doctrines of man's accountableness and man's immortality, of the divine Providence and even of the divine existence, if not actually lost sight of, were, in a great degree, obscured and neutralized by a cumbrous mass of error and absurdity. Now I say that all that the Deist can legitimately claim for human Reason is to be found in the records of Pagan philosophy ; for while Reason was here cast entirely upon her own resources, she tasked her energies to the utmost, and what she did not accomplish then, we have no reason to believe that she *could* accomplish, unaided, in any circumstances. I know indeed that there are systems of religious doctrine which she claims as her own, which, so far as they go, are in accordance with divine truth ; but she has here committed a plagiarism upon the Bible : she has sat down with God's written Revelation spread out before her, and has gathered from it some of the fundamental principles of religion, and incorporated them into a system, and then has exclaimed with equal complacency and injustice, "Behold, in the result of *my* efforts, evidence that a Revelation from Heaven is unnecessary !"

But while I maintain that it is fair to judge of the powers of Reason by what she has actually accomplished, I am well aware that a distinction is to be made

between what she *can* do, darkened and misguided as she is through the influence of depravity, and what she *might* do, if the legitimate operation of her faculties were not, in any degree, counteracted. Suppose, then, Reason, in her uncorrupted state, were to address herself to the business of religious inquiry,—how far may we suppose she could proceed with confidence and certainty; and at what point would her powers begin to falter? It would be fairly within her province to decide that there is an intelligent First Cause of all things; that this Being is omniscient, omnipresent, independent, almighty and eternal. So too she might legitimately arrive at a knowledge of his goodness; for the evidences of this beam upon us from every part of the creation. She might also read in the very constitution of our nature, and especially in the operations of natural conscience, some intimation of divine justice and holiness; though her conclusions on this point could hardly fail to be embarrassed by the apparently universal reign of depravity. She might infer from the perfections of God that he exercises a Providence; though her views of the nature of that Providence, especially as concerned in directing the destiny of the righteous, must, at best, be indistinct; because she knows nothing of God's covenant faithfulness to his people. The operations of man's moral nature very readily suggest the idea of a retribution; and as it is evident that nothing like an exact retribution takes place in this world, the conclusion is irresistible that there must be a future existence to furnish an opportunity for it. But though Reason might decide that the human spirit would survive in some other state of being, as the subject of a retribution, she could *not* decide that its existence would be immortal; for this best of all reasons, that she could never know what was the will of him on

whom its existence depends, unless he were pleased to reveal it. Beyond this point, Reason, even uncorrupted Reason, must have been a blind guide. There were questions of the most vital importance to man, upon which she could do nothing better than dream. Especially to that most momentous of all questions, "How can man be just with his Maker ;"—she must have been absolutely dumb ; or if she had opened her lips, it must have been only to confess her ignorance.

Thus you see that Deism, allowing her all that she could claim under any possible circumstances, shuts us up in a field of comparatively narrow dimensions.—Christianity, on the other hand, brings us into a field of vast extent ; and, as we have reason to believe, permits us to see as far as is consistent with the present infantile state of our faculties. That man has violated the law of his nature, in other words is a sinner, is a matter that comes within the range of every one's consciousness ; but how much is included in being a sinner, it has been left for Christianity alone clearly to reveal. And this she *has* revealed, inasmuch as she has exhibited the divine law in all the perfection of its requirements and in all the fearfulness of its sanctions ; and has described the future retribution of the wicked as a scene of complete, undying, unutterable anguish. And here she discloses a new and sublime economy ;—the economy of redemption. Contemplating man in his ruin, she meets him with tidings of deliverance. As he is guilty and needs an atoning Saviour, as he is polluted and needs an Almighty Sanctifier, she reveals new relations in the Godhead corresponding with the exigences of his condition. She exhibits Jesus Christ as mighty to atone ; the Holy Ghost as all powerful to sanctify ; and even into the endeared name of the Father she throws additional inte-

rest and tenderness, by exhibiting him in the mild majesty of a *reconciled* Father through our Lord Jesus Christ. She shows us how the honours of the law have been vindicated and illustrated by the Redeemer's death ; how repentance towards God and faith in the atonement of Christ may take the place, as a condition of eternal life, of that perfect obedience which the law requires ; how, under the mediatorial dispensation, man may not only be restored to the divine favour, but may ultimately rise higher in the scale of happiness than if he had never stood in need of pardoning mercy. She assures us, not only that man shall exist in a future world, and exist forever, but that the union between body and spirit shall be restored, so that the elements of his original constitution shall not be ultimately disturbed. So far as is important for all practical purposes, she lifts the veil that hides the future, disclosing, on the one hand, the world of glory ; on the other, the world of wo. Am I not right then in saying that there is a mighty contrast between Deism and Christianity in respect to the extent of their discoveries ? But this contrast is equally manifest in

## II. THE CERTAINTY OF THEIR EVIDENCE.

1. Deism appeals to *abstract reasoning* ; Christianity, to *tangible facts*.

To show how little the deductions of Reason are to be relied on in connexion with this subject, it is only necessary to advert to the various and contradictory conclusions to which Deists themselves have arrived in respect to the question, what constitutes the Religion of Nature. Some of them have acknowledged the moral perfections of God ; others have denied them altogether. Some have recognised an essential difference between virtue and vice ; others have maintained that the only distinction between them has its origin in human law or cus-



tom. Some have professed their belief in the soul's immortality; others have strenuously contended that the soul is annihilated in death. All these agree that Reason is a sufficient guide; and yet she guides them to directly opposite conclusions. And if Reason can do no better than this where she is highly cultivated, and surrounds herself with the honours of philosophy, what can she do when she happens to have her dwelling in the bosom of the untutored peasant, or where her faculties have scarcely ever been exercised but upon material objects? If Herbert and Hobbes, Hume and Bolingbroke, could not reason out a system of religion which bore the impress of uniformity or consistency; can we expect any thing more,—rather ought we not to expect much less, from the great mass of the world, whose capacities are generally greatly inferior, and whose time is chiefly and necessarily occupied by other matters? And is it not true that very few uncultivated Deists ever think of doing any thing more than collecting and retailing the dogmas of the master spirits of the school; and that, however they may contend for the sufficiency of Reason in matters of religion, they are satisfied to make very little use of their own Reason? I say then, if facts furnish any just ground for an argument, the deductions of unassisted Reason are to be received with great caution; and as Deism places her sole reliance here, her evidence is proportionably feeble and unsatisfactory.

Christianity founds *her* claims upon palpable facts. She does indeed, in several ways, appeal to Reason; and always with triumphant success; but the office which she prescribes to her is that of considering and estimating facts, rather than framing theories and settling principles. When the Mosaic dispensation was introduced, God commissioned Moses to perform a series of the most stupen-



dous *miracles*; as evidence, not only to the people of Israel, but to the surrounding nations, that the religion which was thus proclaimed was from above. When Jesus introduced the new dispensation, he too authenticated his heavenly commission by performing works which, at least, proved that the hand of God was with him; and which it were utterly impossible that an impostor could successfully counterfeit. And these deeds of power and mercy were performed in the light of day, and in the presence of a competent number of witnesses, and were frequently repeated during a period of several years. And after our Lord's personal ministry had closed, he commissioned his Apostles to go forth preaching the same gospel which he had preached, and endued them with power to prove the divinity of their mission by performing substantially the same wonderful works which he had performed; and in accordance with this injunction, and under these miraculous endowments, they went forth promulgating the great truths of Christianity, and enforcing them by the exhibition of a super-human energy. These miraculous gifts have indeed long since ceased from the church; but they were continued long enough to answer the end for which they were bestowed,—the establishment of Christianity: and not only an authentick but inspired record of them has been preserved; so that we may appeal to this record of the miracles with as much confidence as the early Christians could appeal to the miracles themselves.

I may mention also the evidence derived from *prophecy*, as not only partaking, in a great degree, of the same palpable character with that which I have just considered, but as constantly gathering strength from the lapse of ages. There are prophecies in existence de-

signed to authenticate Christianity, which were delivered several thousand years ago, some of which have already received a complete fulfilment, the record of which is to be found in the history of the world ; while others are gradually fulfilling in events that are passing before our eyes. It is indeed an easy matter to turn away from this branch of the evidence, and not come to the light which it affords ; and yet it is evidence of the most conclusive kind, and which it is fairly within the province of any mind to appreciate. If it be admitted, as no doubt it must be, that the evidence from miracles is somewhat less impressive now than it was at the time they were wrought, yet the opposite of this is true of prophecy ; for each succeeding age, and each succeeding year, furnishes materials for a history which is a striking, and in many instances a literal, counterpart to scriptural predictions. If the whole future is spread out only before the omniscient mind, then he who predicts with perfect accuracy a long train of events which at the time seem most improbable, ages before the period of their occurrence, gives the highest possible evidence to those who have an opportunity of comparing the predictions with the events, that he has been counselled from above ; and the conclusion is irresistible that that system of religion with which such prophecies are connected, bears the stamp of truth and divinity.

I must not omit to say in this connexion that, while Christianity appeals to higher evidence than Deism for her own peculiar truths, she places *Natural Religion* in a much brighter light than the best efforts of Reason have ever been able to shed around her. While she takes certain great and essential truths for granted, as the basis on which she erects her superstructure, she disentangles each of those truths from the mazes of error

into which they had been thrown, and presents them clothed with new beauty and surrounded with clearer evidence. I am aware that an objection may be raised on philosophical grounds against admitting miracles as an evidence of Natural Religion; and yet I appeal to you whether, if an individual were to come among us preaching Natural Religion and nothing more, and were to authenticate his mission by performing works which manifestly involved a suspension of the laws of nature,—I ask you whether common sense would not acknowledge his authority, even though philosophy might choose to dispute it? Suppose an individual were predisposed to believe the truths of Natural Religion, and yet had not been able fully to satisfy himself concerning them, and the Christian Revelation containing a republication of these truths were to be put into his hands, do you not believe that this would contribute greatly to resolve his doubts and to establish his faith? Is it not more than probable that he would henceforth receive these doctrines with an unhesitating and confident conviction?

2. Deism makes no pretension to any *authoritative publication* of her doctrines; Christianity claims that *her* truths are embodied in a *perspicuous, permanent, inspired record*.

Ask the Deist where his system is to be found, and he will tell you with an air of triumph that it is inscribed on the very elements of man's nature; and yet, as we have already seen, there are scarcely two individuals who interpret this record in the same manner. At any rate, it is something which lies too much in the region of doubt and abstraction to satisfy common minds: the very constitution of human nature seems to require something beyond it; and nothing so exactly meets the exigences of the case as a written record, bearing the

stamp of divine authority;—a record which shall not only be open alike to all, but which shall be so plain that nothing but obstinate prejudice or gross depravity shall be able to pervert it. Deism has no such record. To the most uncultivated peasant who inquires where her doctrines are to be found, she can only reply by bidding him commune with the glories of nature around him, or notice what is passing in his own bosom.

But if Christianity be interrogated in respect to *her* doctrines, she points at once to a record of them with which she has identified her own existence. In the sacred scriptures is contained every important doctrine and precept which Jesus and his Apostles inculcated, as well as every essential fact by which the divinity of our religion is proved. And this record comes to us in a form best adapted to the circumstances and capacities of men: it is not a course of abstract reasoning or continuous history, but an admixture of doctrines and precepts, principles and facts, thrown together by different persons, at different periods, and in circumstances which forbade the possibility of collusion.

Now there are two points of view in which this written record to which Christianity appeals, may be considered as rendering her evidence more distinct and impressive. In the first place, the truths which she inculcates, and the facts by which she is sustained, are here brought home to the very senses; so that he that runneth may read and understand. And then the very fact that such a record exists, taken in connexion with its character, furnishes decisive proof of the divine origin of Christianity. And if the skeptick denies this, let him tell me how such a Book as the New Testament could have ever come to be generally received, if it contained only the record of a base imposture? Especially how



came it to be received by the very people among whom the wonderful facts which it records, purport to have taken place, and who must infallibly have known whether such facts had occurred or not? If he tells me that it was introduced at a period subsequent to that at which it claims to have been, then I ask him for any thing like a parallel in the whole record of human experience, to that credulity which should have admitted its claims under such circumstances;—should have admitted that such a wonderful train of events as the New Testament describes,—events having a most important bearing on the destinies of the world, should have occurred a few centuries before, and yet the record of them have been entirely lost, until suddenly the volume in which they are contained should be ushered into the world. If this were so, I ask him how this book came to be so extensively received by inquisitive and investigating minds; how the facts which it contains came to be alluded to by some of the most celebrated heathen writers at the very time of their occurrence; how it came to pass that there are various quotations made from it by many different authors from the time that it claims to have been written; in a word how it is that all historical testimony fixes the date of these writings, and of the facts which they record, at the period in which Christianity professes to have been introduced? And I ask yet again, how comes all this harmony, both in respect to doctrines and precepts, in the productions of so many authors, at various times, and under different circumstances? Whence come all the simplicity and beauty of style, the originality and grandeur of thought, the elevated morality, the perfect purity, which breathe in the writings of these unlettered peasants, if we deny that they had that communion with the source of all wisdom which is necessa-



ry to stamp their productions with the seal of inspiration, and of course their religion with the seal of divinity? You see then that, whether we consider the scriptures as embodying the truths and facts of Christianity, and thus making them palpable to the senses, or as illustrating more directly the evidence of Christianity by giving the only satisfactory account of her origin, and by the wonderful peculiarities of their internal structure, we are brought, in either case, to the conclusion that she has in her written record a mighty advantage over Deism.

3. Deism has no *external organization* : Christianity has her *ordinances* and *institutions*.

It must indeed be conceded to Reason that she teaches the duty of worshipping God ; and this duty many of the Deists have acknowledged in words, though few of them, it is believed, have not denied it in practice. If it be allowed that Reason can discover the natural perfections of God in connexion with his goodness, and can ascertain the relationship we sustain to him as creatures, it may also be admitted that she inculcates the duty of approaching him with reverence in view of his majesty, with gratitude in view of his favours, with supplication in view of our dependance upon him. But farther than this Natural Religion cannot go. She prescribes no rites of religious worship ; she has no institutions by means of which she assumes a visibility, thus finding her way to the understandings and hearts of men through the senses. This deficiency must be deeply felt by beings constituted as we are, and accustomed to view almost every thing in connexion with external objects : and the result in respect to the great mass of Deists proves it ; for certain it is either that they are chargeable with base hypocrisy in not believing that God ought to be worshipped while yet they profess to believe it, or else their faith

is so feeble that it never discovers itself in corresponding conduct. And as the doctrines of Natural Religion stand or fall together, it may fairly be inferred that whatever has a tendency to render one of these truths less impressive, will exert a similar influence in respect to all of them.

Christianity supplies this deficiency ; inasmuch as her very existence is identified with positive precepts. Her grand organization is the church ; and through this medium she puts forth her efforts to regenerate and bless the world. And then there are various institutions and ordinances from which the church derives an additional degree of visibility ; particularly the sabbath, the ministry of the gospel, public worship, baptism and the Lord's Supper.

I apply now substantially the same remark here as was made under the preceding article : this arrangement of Christianity is made subservient to the illustration of her evidence in two ways : it clothes the spirit with a body ; it brings out abstract truths in such a form that our very senses can take cognizance of them ; it associates them with objects which we can see, and taste, and handle, and thus the principle of association is rendered strongly tributary to the principle of faith. And in addition to this, these various ordinances and institutions point back to the introduction of Christianity, and some of them are commemorative of events with which Christianity is absolutely identified. The ordinance of the Supper, for instance, is designed to commemorate the death of Christ ; and purports to have been instituted by Christ himself a little before his death. That it actually was instituted at the time it claims to have been, is proved by the uniform testimony of all ecclesiastical history. That it was instituted by Christ himself, is

manifest from the fact that neither his friends nor his enemies would have done it: for his friends would not have dared to attempt it; and it was the interest of his enemies not to institute new memorials of him, but to blot out whatever might be in existence. But if it were instituted by Christ at the time specified, it must have been perfectly obvious to all whether he was what he claimed to be; and if he had not been, it is impossible, under the circumstances of the case, that the ordinance should have been perpetuated. The disciples and others must have known whether he wrought the miracles and exhibited the character to which he laid claim. They must have subsequently known whether he rose from the dead, as he declared that he would do, in attestation of his Messiahship. And if no such miracles had existed, and especially if the grave had continued to hold him, they could not have resisted the conviction that he was an impostor; and in that case could have had no possible motive to commemorate his death; particularly as, in doing so, they subjected themselves to the severest sufferings that human nature could endure. I say then with confidence that the fact that the early Christians did celebrate the ordinance of the Supper, and then transmitted it, according to the Saviour's direction, to other generations of Christians, so that it has been continued in the church to the present hour, constitutes an argument for the truth of the gospel at which infidelity ought to hang her head. And every other institution connected with Christianity, though it may not supply an argument in all respects equally striking, lends a decisive testimony to her divine original.

We may view this contrast between the two systems still farther, in respect to

## III. THE ENERGY OF THEIR OPERATIONS.

Under this article I shall endeavour to show by a reference to the elements of the two systems, that the one might reasonably be expected to be comparatively powerless, the other to operate with mighty energy; and then appeal to your own observation for evidence that this is actually so.

1. Deism includes but *few* truths: Christianity, *many*.

Truth has a natural adaptation not only to the faculties of the mind, but to the affections of the heart. Its energy may indeed be resisted:—this results from the very nature of man as a moral agent; but it still remains true that it is the only legitimate depository of all moral influence; that when it is fairly presented to the mind, unless it is obstructed by prejudice or passion, it finds its way to the moral powers of the soul. And it operates upon our desires and affections, our hopes and fears, guiding, restraining, controlling them, and sometimes accomplishing an entire revolution in all the habits and principles of moral action. If then it belongs to the very nature of truth that, when legitimately received, it brings the faculties and feelings into exercise, it is evident that the greater the amount of truth that is brought to bear upon the mind, other things being equal, the greater will be the influence that is exerted.

Now we have already seen that the truths which Deism includes, allowing to her all that she has ever claimed, and far more than she can reasonably claim, are comparatively few; while Christianity reveals many hidden mysteries, and thus vastly enlarges the circle of our religious knowledge. Admit that Deism teaches the existence and some of the perfections of God; that she gives some general idea of a Providence, and points to a future state of retribution;—yet have we not seen that



the discoveries of Christianity are incomparably more extensive and glorious ; that *she* exhibits a mysterious relation in the Godhead of which Reason never could have dreamed ; that she assures man not only of his future existence but of his immortality ; that she brings out the mediatorial dispensation in all the extent of its provision and all the grandeur of its relations ? If then we were to admit that the truths of Natural Religion were accompanied by the same degree of evidence with those of Christianity, we should still be forced to the conclusion that the latter were adapted to exert a much more powerful influence than the former, simply on the ground that they take the wider range.

2. Deism requires belief on *feeble* evidence : Christianity, on evidence *the most complete*.

You will instantly perceive that the influence of any truth, or any system of truth, upon the heart and life, other things being equal, must be in proportion to the degree of evidence by which it comes attended. Suppose, for instance, you were at a distance from home, transacting important business, and were to hear through some very equivocal medium that some member of your family lay dangerously ill ;—you might not indeed entirely disregard the rumour, but still the circumstances in which it reached you, might render it so exceedingly questionable that you would not feel yourself justified, in view of it, to break away from the important business in which you were engaged. But suppose that a special messenger were to be despatched from your family, to apprise you that your child was rapidly sinking under the power of a violent disease ; suppose you were to receive a letter written in the well known hand of your wife, and bearing in every line marks of the haste and agony in which it was written, informing you that, if



you would ever see the beloved object again, you must lose no time in returning home;—your business, no matter how important it might be, would not, for a moment, constitute the least obstacle to your setting your face homeward; and, if need be, you would travel night and day, and deny yourself food as well as rest, until you had reached the bed side of your dying child. Now here is an illustration of the different effects of faith, as sustained by different degrees of evidence. In the former case the evidence is feeble; and your faith is proportionably feeble; and it exerts little influence upon your heart, and none at all upon your conduct. In the latter case the evidence is overwhelming; and your faith mounts up to assurance; and it brings the active powers of your soul into lively exercise; and it leads you not only to vigorous effort, but, as the case may be, to severe self denial. When you had only a feeble impression that the life of your child was in jeopardy, you could keep on transacting your business with your usual composure; but the moment that impression had gathered the strength of a confident conviction, it became powerfully operative, and carried you, almost as if on the wings of the wind, to the scene of your anticipated affliction.

Apply now the general principle which comes out in this illustration to the case we are considering. Deism, as we have already seen, demands belief on comparatively slight evidence; while Christianity surrounds *her* truths with a blaze of evidence which no impartial mind can resist. We have seen that the former appeals to abstract reasoning which is characterized by great uncertainty; has no authoritative record of her doctrines, and no external organization to confer upon her visibility;—that the latter appeals directly to palpable facts;

has her doctrines embodied in a tangible form, and lives and operates through her ordinances and institutions. Is it not manifest then, on the principle we have been illustrating, that the former must have a comparatively feeble hold of the heart, and must exert a proportionably feeble influence on the life; that the latter is adapted to bring into vigorous exercise all the powers of the soul, and to keep the whole man under active and steady contribution.

3. Deism contemplates truth chiefly in its *speculative principles*: Christianity, in its *practical relations*.

Take, for instance, the character of God—Deism has always been chiefly employed in investigating the *absolute* existence of the divine attributes; and in pursuing these investigations, has had much to do with the nature of infinity and the connexion between cause and effect. In the greatness or the littleness, the darkness or the splendour of her speculations, she has entirely lost sight of the practical bearings of the truth she has set herself to establish; and though she may have brought out something to bewilder or dazzle the imagination, it is nothing that makes a powerful appeal to the heart. Christianity, on the other hand, lets all useless speculation alone; and she exhibits the character of God chiefly through the relations he sustains to us, and in connexion with the duties which we owe to him. She exhibits him as our Father in Heaven, from whom cometh down every good gift, and to whom we are bound to render the homage of the heart and the obedience of the life;—as our Counsellor, who has condescended to instruct us in respect to every part of our duty, and whose teachings we are sacredly bound to heed;—as our Judge, at whose tribunal we are finally to render an account, and by whose hand our eternal retributions are to be measured

out. Instead of leading us into a maze of abstruse speculations respecting unity, she tells us that "the Lord our God is one Lord, and Him only must we serve." Instead of perplexing us with a mass of unintelligible jargon concerning the essential properties either of corporeal or spiritual existence, she simply declares to us that "God is a Spirit;" and in connexion with this declaration, charges us "to worship him in spirit and in truth." Do you not perceive that this latter mode of viewing the divine character, while it is far more simple, is also far more impressive, than the former; and that, while the one is adapted to lift the whole soul to God, the other leaves it to admire the beauty, or lose itself in the mazes, of its own speculations?

The same general remark applies to the doctrine of a future life—No doubt Reason in her uncorrupted state would be capable of arriving at the discovery of this truth; but if you will examine the record of her efforts in relation to this subject, you will find that in her attempts to prove what was really clear, she has so wrapped it up in the mist of philosophical speculation, that its practical bearings are almost entirely concealed. Indeed so unintelligible and absurd and absolutely childish are many of the reasonings of the philosophers on this subject, that they are adapted with unreflecting minds to bring the doctrine itself into discredit; and to induce the suspicion that, where there is so much to make war upon common sense, there can be no truth at the bottom. But Christianity, keeping clear of this abyss of absurdity into which Philosophy has plunged, assures us that we are destined to a future existence; and by what she does not reveal respecting it, as well as by what she does, she appeals directly and powerfully to the active principles of our nature. She has connected with this doc-

trine such a mixture of revelation and of mystery as was best adapted, in our present state, to give the doctrine its legitimate effect ; and she always holds it up as one of the strongest arguments to a holy life. How much greater the influence of this truth when thus exhibited, than it could be under any form in which Reason has ever dreamed of presenting it !

If it be true then that Deism is concerned chiefly with speculation, and Christianity chiefly with practice ; that the former obscures truth by the very arguments which she uses to illustrate it, and neutralizes, to a great extent, what is true by connecting with it what is false and absurd, while the latter brings out truth in its most simple form, unmixed with error and unembarrassed by speculation ; surely there can be no doubt that the one is adapted to exert but a feeble influence, and the other to operate with a mighty energy.

4. Deism appeals to man only as a *creature* : Christianity also as a *sinner*.

I admit that pure Natural Religion recognises the fact that man as a creature of God, formed by his hand and sustained by his Providence, is under obligation to love, serve and glorify him ; and that this obligation cannot be violated but at the expense of incurring the divine displeasure. And it cannot be denied that this relationship of man to his Maker supplies motives of great weight to a particular course of moral action. But this relationship, as Natural Religion presents it, is so general in its nature, and there are so many important questions connected with it which Reason in her most improved state is utterly inadequate to answer, that it can hardly be expected to suggest considerations powerful enough to exert a controlling influence over the heart and life.—Let man contemplate himself merely as God's creature,



independently of all the interest which this relationship gathers from Christianity, and it is probable that he will find little that will rouse his feelings into exercise, or bring his faculties into action.

Christianity too views man as a creature ; and she invests this relation with an incomparably deeper interest than Reason had ever dreamed of, by exhibiting the condescending regards of his Maker towards him, and the superlative and immortal felicity which he is capable of attaining. But she goes farther, and contemplates him also as a sinner ; that is, a creature who has violated God's law and drawn upon himself the curse ; who is polluted in his whole moral nature, and has within himself the elements of an eternal ruin. And she meets him with the glorious intelligence that God is in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not imputing unto men their trespasses ; that, on condition of repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, there is pardon for the guilty, sanctification for the polluted, everlasting life for those who have merited eternal death.

And now I ask you what other system of truth you can conceive of, which has in it the elements of such amazing power ; which is so adapted to awaken the feelings of the heart, to control the actions of the life ? In what way could you expect to rouse an individual to such vigorous effort, as by showing him that the greatest good is within his reach, while yet he is in danger of incurring the most tremendous evil ? But this Christianity does in the exhibition which she makes of the glories of Heaven and the horrors of Hell ; of the straight and narrow way that leads to life, and the broad and beaten path that leads to death. What principle of man's nature is there to which the peculiar truths of Christianity do not make a direct and powerful appeal ?



Is he susceptible of hope—What can call it into exercise, if not the incorruptible glories which Christ has purchased for his people? Is he susceptible of fear—What object will he fear more than the wrath of God as it is displayed in the Redeemer's sufferings on the cross? Is he susceptible of gratitude—What then must be the measure of his gratitude towards Him, who, though he was rich, for *his* sake became poor? Is he susceptible of devout admiration—What better fitted to call it into exercise than that stupendous plan into which angels desire to look? If these are some of the most active principles of human nature—and who will deny that they are so?—and if the plan of redeeming mercy is adapted to appeal with greater power to each of them than any other system of truth that can be proposed, I ask again, who can estimate the inherent energies of Christianity?

5. Deism recognises no *supernatural or special divine influence upon the heart*: Christianity reveals the doctrine of *the Holy Spirit's agency*.

Deism, especially in her purer forms, is ready enough to admit the general doctrine of Providence; that is, that God governs the world according to fixed laws. But this system binds him down to these laws so closely as never to admit the least departure from them; indeed it makes his presence in the universe a comparatively unimportant matter; for it supposes that the great system of things moves forward agreeably to the ordinance of Him who arranged it, in much the same sense that a machine continues its operations while it remains under the impulse which first set it in motion. You will readily perceive that here is no place either for the doctrine of miracles, or the doctrine of a special divine influence; for these doctrines imply that God may so far vary from

his ordinary course of procedure, as to put forth his hand in special acts either of mercy or of judgment.

Whatever of truth Deism admits in respect to the doctrine of Providence, Christianity also recognises; but the latter exhibits the doctrine in a far more attractive form, and with some highly important additions. In Jehovah she sees the wise and Sovereign Disposer of all things; but instead of regarding him as little more than an inactive spectator of the operations of the laws he has ordained, she contemplates him as ever active in the administration of his government, and comprehending within the circle of his regards the least, as well as the grandest, events. Beside this providential agency in ordering our lot, she recognises the native power of truth over the conscience and the heart, and relies upon it as the grand instrument of gaining her victories. But more than all, she reveals a special divine influence which operates in a mysterious way upon our moral nature; and which accomplishes what nothing else can accomplish,—the transformation of the flinty heart into a heart that can mourn for its sins, and beat sympathetically and gratefully to the tender expressions of redeeming love.

There are two views to be taken of this doctrine of the Holy Spirit's influence, both of which illustrate the peculiar energy of Christianity. In the first place, there is an agency from above hereby secured to us, which alone is adequate to the complete renovation of our moral nature. The truth is indeed "the sword;" but unless it is wielded by "the Spirit," it will never effectually slay the enmity of the heart: the truth is also a healing balm; but unless it is applied by "the Spirit," it will never prove the needed remedy to the wounded conscience. And then again, this doctrine is adapted to set

man at work most vigorously and efficiently for himself. When his eyes are opened to a true view of his condition, he might well enough sit down in despair, if he were compelled to reflect that the work of his regeneration must be accomplished entirely by himself; and even the Christian might reasonably enough abandon the hope of ever gaining the victory over his spiritual enemies, if he had not the privilege of looking beyond his own strength. But when the one reads that "the Spirit of God is mighty to the pulling down of strong holds," and when the other reads that "the Spirit helpeth our infirmities, making intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered;" there is every possible encouragement for the former to "strive to enter in at the straight gate," and for the latter to go forward with renewed zeal in his conflict with corruption and temptation. So also in the great effort which the church is making, in obedience to her ascended Lord, for the conversion of the world;—when she looks abroad upon the principalities and powers with which she has to contend, and contemplates the mountainous obstacles which rise up to impede her progress, there is but one consideration that keeps her from despair; it is, that the arm of the Lord will certainly be revealed for her aid:—and when she remembers this, the smile of gladness relumes her countenance, the confidence of success animates her heart, and nerves her arm; and mountains sink into plains before her. Thus while almighty power is actually brought to her aid, the assurance that she shall be thus sustained, brings out her own energies to the utmost; and she moves forward in her work under the advantage of having all her own power combined with the strength of omnipotence.

I have endeavoured to show you by a reference to some of the leading elements of Deism and Christianity, that we might reasonably expect that there would be a mighty difference in the energy of their respective operations. And now in conclusion of this article, I beg leave to appeal in one word to the history of the two systems, or, if you please, to your own observation of their practical influence, in confirmation of the views which have been exhibited.

If we consider Deism merely as the great foe of Christianity, we certainly cannot impute to her any lack either of energy or industry. Under her influence, men have tasked themselves to the utmost,—have strained every nerve, and appealed to every principle in the human bosom, with a view to drive Christianity from the earth. But if you consider Deism merely as a system of religious doctrine, including those truths which are supposed to be revealed by the light of nature, then I hesitate not to say that her whole history shows her to have been, in a great degree, powerless. I do not say that there is no power in the truths which the Deist acknowledges; but I do say that he feels not the power which actually resides in them; that they are held so feebly, or held in connexion with so much error, that they exert little or no authority over his heart or conscience. The Deist professes to believe that God is a Being of infinite perfection, and that man his creature is entirely dependant upon him, and of course that it is the duty of man to offer to God supplications and thanksgivings. But do you believe that these truths actually induce the Deist to worship God? I do not deny that instances of this kind may have occurred; but I confess I never yet had the evidence of one; and if they do exist, I believe you will agree with me that they are ex-



ceedingly rare. Deism too has always been a sworn enemy to self-denial, and a never failing friend to self-indulgence. When have you ever seen or heard of a company of Deists going forth under the influence of the truths they have professed to believe, to the accomplishment of some great and good object which must put in requisition the whole amount of their intellectual and moral energies? And I go farther and ask, where have you ever known a single Deist, whose faculties and feelings were fairly drawn out into bold and vigorous action, where it was not manifestly to be attributed to some other influence than that of the doctrines which were embodied in his religious system?

A single glance at the triumphs of Christianity is enough to show that the power which we have contemplated as dwelling in her is no creature of imagination. Look at her triumphs in the very infancy of her existence; and hear her saying, "Let there be light," and then behold the darkness beginning to roll away. See her setting up her dominion in thousands of hearts, and driving out the vile usurpers which had held them in subjection. See her moving forward in the meekness and majesty of love, conquering and to conquer, until thrones, and principalities, and powers, yield to her superior authority. Behold her abroad in the world at this hour, changing tiger-like ferocity into lamb-like gentleness; demolishing heathen altars, burning idol gods, and waving her standard over some of the darkest and bloodiest territories of the empire of Satan.—She has indeed often had her truths obscured and perverted, and, in the same proportion, has been bereaved of her native energy; but never has she been suffered to appear in the majesty of her own attractions, but that she has drawn men unto her: never has she gone



forth in her simplicity and purity, but that she has accomplished wonders, which prove that she is a native of the skies.

We pass to the last point in the contrast between Deism and Christianity, viz :

#### IV. THE CHARACTER OF THEIR RESULTS.

1. Deism *can do nothing to hush the clamours of guilt* : Christianity *soothes the troubled conscience into peace*.

If, amidst the singular events that sometimes occur, an awakened sinner should ever approach a Deist as his counsellor, and should propound to him that momentous question, 'What he must do to be saved,' I should really be curious to stand by, and listen to the answer with which the inquiry would be met. I will suppose—what I pray God may never be the sad reality—that some individual before me, has become a Deist; that you have learned to be at home in the company of those who scoff at the Bible, and have yourself become as great a scoffer as the greatest; but having wandered into the house of God,—perhaps for the very purpose of collecting materials for impious cavil or vulgar ridicule,—you have heard something that has come like an arrow to your soul—like a cloud over your path; that has made you pause in horror to contemplate the future, and waked up in your bosom a fierce minister of vengeance, whose very existence you had ridiculed as a dream, only because you had brought over him a lethargy. Now I acknowledge it were most natural to expect, in these circumstances, that you would turn away from those who had before been your associates, and seek counsel of some *christian* friend,—perhaps of the very minister who had been the instrument of arousing you; but I will here suppose that you should first spread your case

before some one or more of your unbelieving companions, and let them prescribe for it as well as they can. You select one in whom you have been accustomed to confide without reserve; and in whose friendship you think you have a pledge that he will at least not trifle with the anguish of your spirit. But he laughs at you as the child of folly or of phrenzy; and instead of offering you even the sympathy of a friend, he leaves your heart bleeding afresh from his unkindness. That you may give Deism a fair trial, you select yet another infidel counsellor, and he the most sober, reflecting, and amiable, of all your unbelieving associates. You tell him honestly that there is a burden upon your conscience which you know not how to throw off; that the conviction that you are a sinner weighs upon you like a mountain; and you press him with that most troublesome of all problems,—troublesome alike to him and to you,—‘how you shall obtain the divine forgiveness.’ Not disposed, like the other, to insult your agony, he tells you that he doubts not you are contending chiefly with a diseased imagination; but that, so far as the evil of which you complain is real, the proper remedy for it is repentance. But you ask him how he arrives at the conclusion that repentance will be availing; and his reply is that he infers it from the mercy of God. You inquire yet again, how he knows, apart from Revelation, that God is merciful; or even if that were admitted, how he knows that he is *so* merciful as to forgive sin upon repentance. You remind him that if Reason teaches that God is merciful, she teaches with equal distinctness that he is just; that his justice requires that he should guard the honours of his law; that his law has made no provision for the pardon of sin; and that you cannot see upon the principles of Natural Religion how sin *can* be pardoned in consisten-

cy with the honours of the eternal throne. I do not say that you have hereby sealed his lips; but I am sure you have left him nothing to say. You have given him a problem which it is beyond the power of Reason to solve; and if he is an honest man, he will either refer you to some other guide, or bid you sit down in despair.

From this most unsatisfactory conference, you go back to your chamber to weep; and I hear you say to yourself, 'If the system from which I have sought consolation be true, nothing remains for me but to weep my life away in a perpetual agony.' But presently I see you spreading your case before a minister of Christ. He tells you that your condition, when viewed apart from the provisions of the gospel, is even more wretched than your gloomiest conceptions have made it: but with this acknowledgement he begins to talk to you on new grounds respecting forgiveness. He explains to you the glorious fact that "God is in Christ reconciling the world to himself." He shows you that, in virtue of the sacrifice on Calvary, the vilest transgressor may be pardoned and yet the honours of the law remain inviolate; that by faith in that sacrifice, you may obtain the remission of *your* sins, and a title to more than the forfeited blessings of immortality. I watch you while this cheering doctrine is announced and explained, and see your countenance beginning to brighten with an expression of hope. As I behold your eye fastened upon the cross, I contemplate the workings of living faith in your soul. You fall into the arms of Jesus, and recognise him as a Saviour. You listen to the voice of Jesus, and hear him say, 'Thy sins be forgiven thee.' You think of the burden that was just pressing upon your conscience; but in place of it, find a joy that is unspeakable. You look up to the eternal throne, and see the stern majesty

of the Lawgiver and the Judge melted into the mild majesty of the forgiving Father. You were wretched up to the moment that you became a Christian. Deism had tried her skill upon you, and left you as wretched as ever; and after she had abandoned your case as hopeless, Christianity came and prescribed a remedy for you, alike glorious in its nature and effectual in its application.

2. Deism can point to *no monuments of her sanctifying power*: Christianity *has them without number*.

Much of what might otherwise be appropriate under this article, I have already anticipated in contrasting the two systems in respect to the energy of their operations; for the very power which the one lacks and the other possesses, is a power to cure the moral disorders of the soul, and to form in it a spirit of heavenly purity. I am willing here to concede to Deism every thing that she can fairly claim: that she has numbered, and still numbers, among her votaries, some men who are not only humane and courteous in the intercourse of life, but sober, and moral, and public spirited, and ready to lend themselves to many good objects, far be it from me to deny; but still I must be permitted to ask for the monuments of her purifying power. The leading elements of piety are the love of God, and the fear of God: show me a Deist, if you can, who gives you any evidence of possessing either! Both of these are active principles and lead directly to obedience; but where are the Deists who make it manifest that their grand aim is to please and glorify God? Nay, I shall venture one step farther, and assert that the Deists as a class are immoral men; and that it is a rare case that you will find an individual who rejects divine revelation, that does not practically show that there is a reason for it in the strictness of some



of its moral precepts. I appeal to the lives of the most celebrated Deists of the last century,—men whose names have stood out on the records of infidelity,—for evidence that I am doing them no injustice. I appeal to their writings too, in which they boldly and coolly attack some of the first principles of morals, and license the very worst passions of the heart, and endeavour to sweep away every barrier to the perpetration of crime. Herbert and Hobbes, Tindall and Shaftsbury, Hume and Bolingbroke, Woolston and Chubb, were professedly Deists: I do not say indeed that they had all learned to wallow in as deep pollution, or were as familiar with the dialect of the damned, as Paine; but I do say that, either from what they have written, or what has been written concerning them, you may infer most legitimately that not one of them had any reverence for the divine character,—not one of them was, in any proper sense of the word, a moral man. These were indeed men of another age, and we know nothing of them but what has been transmitted to us through the medium of their own works, or from the generation to which they belonged. But we have all known men who have professedly held their views, and have even gloried in being their disciples; and I ask you whether, among them all, you have ever known a truly devout and conscientious man; nay, I will go so far as to ask whether, in the great majority of cases, you have not found, by a close inspection of the characters of these men, that they were setting some one or more of the undisputed rules of morality at defiance? I say again, far be it from me to deny to Deism any thing which she can reasonably claim; but grant her the utmost that she can claim, and you are still held to the conviction that she exerts not a sanctifying, but corrupting, influence.



Far different is the conclusion to which we are brought, when we consult the records of Christianity. Wherever she has prevailed, she has exerted a transforming influence on the very elements of human character. Indifference or opposition to all religion has given place to an exemplary piety : selfishness in its varied forms has given place to a benevolence as active as it is universal. Under the teachings of Christianity, men have learned to cherish the spirit, and to engage in the exercises, of devotion ; to yield a cheerful and filial obedience to all God's commandments ; to deny themselves and take up the cross ; to be meek and humble, condescending and forgiving ; to do good to all men as they have opportunity. What influence could have made Paul, Baxter, Brainard, and Martin, what they were, but the influence of Christianity ? What but this could have kept them in such constant communion with God ; could have made them so forgetful of their own personal ease, and so bold to encounter the most appalling obstacles, for the good of their fellow-men ;—in a word, could have imparted to them a character which infidelity, with all her hardihood, can scarcely assail without a blush ?—These names, it is true, shine out on the records of Christianity with a glorious prominence ; but there is not a spot on earth where our religion has prevailed in its purity, but I can point to some as monuments of its regenerating power. And just in proportion as it has prevailed, have such monuments been multiplied, and an elevated piety and an exemplary morality have shed around their hallowed influence.

3. Deism furnishes *no adequate solace to the heart under the sorrows of life*: Christianity yields the *most abundant consolation*.

I have often met the skeptick when the waves of affliction were rolling over him ; and have always regarded him as one of the most pitiable of mortals. Sometimes indeed I have seen him, under the influence of natural fortitude, exhibit a tranquillity of spirit at which I have marvelled ; but much oftener have I beheld him exhibit an agony of spirit at which I have shuddered. And I wonder not that he should yield to the very phrenzy of grief, so long as he looks for consolation to the tender mercies of Deism. I will suppose that I were myself at this hour just beginning to feel the weight of some heavy burden of wo,—if you please, that I had just closed the eyes of some beloved object for whom I would gladly have died ; and that, in my half-phrenzied state of mind, I should be so inconsiderate as to turn to some skeptical friend who was standing by, and ask him what he could do to alleviate my agony. He tells me that these events are inevitable. My troubled heart answers, ‘There is no comfort in that.’ He tells me that it is beneath the dignity of my nature to be overwhelmed with grief. My troubled heart answers again, ‘There is no comfort in that.’ He tells me, yet once more, that afflictions result from the present constitution of things, and therefore are to be patiently submitted to. And my troubled heart answers yet again, ‘Neither is there any comfort in that.’ In the effort to sooth me he has become a mocker of my grief. I am sick of such miserable comforters. I turn away and open my ear to the counsel of some Christian friend.

And what hast thou to say, Disciple of Christ, that will suppress these rising sobs ? I hear him answer, ‘God thy Father hath done it ;—he hath done it for thy good ;—he hath done it in covenant faithfulness ;—and by it he designs to prepare thee for wearing a brighter

crown. Jesus thy Saviour hath experienced incomparably more bitter sufferings than these in thy behalf; and surely thou wilt not think it a hardship, especially in view of the glory that shall follow, that the disciple should be as his Lord.' I ask no more. My troubled spirit revives and the current of my grief is arrested. I look up to God my Father and say, "Thy will be done." I look up to Jesus my Redeemer and say, "The cup which thou hast given me,"—far less bitter than that which thou hast received in my behalf,—'shall I not drink it?' I am tranquil now, for my confidence is in Jehovah my Strength. I hear the clods rattle upon the coffin of my friend, and still I can lift the eye of faith to Heaven and say, "Father, not as I will, but as thou wilt."

I have spoken of an event which may well enough represent the ordinary afflictions of life; and of the impotence of Deism on the one hand, and the power of Christianity on the other, to yield adequate consolation. But I should not do justice to this branch of my subject, if I were not distinctly to present the contrast between the Deist's and the Christian's dying scene; and show you how the one is left alone in nature's greatest exigency,—how the other triumphs in the strength of an almighty arm. And here I am, by no means, disposed to deny that there have been instances in which Deists have persevered in the belief of their system to the last, and have passed through the dark valley as indifferent to the future as if they were brutes. And these instances are easily enough accounted for, not only from the laws that regulate the formation of a sinful habit, but from the fact that beyond a certain point in transgression, God gives up the sinner judicially to be the victim of his own voluntary infatuation. But I maintain that, in far the greater number of cases, in which Deism would seem to

rise above fear in the near prospect of death, her triumph is nothing better than miserable affectation ; and not unfrequently the effort at disguise betrays itself, and the secrets of the heart work their way out through the expression of the countenance, or even the undesigned confession of the lips. I know how frequently and how triumphantly the case of Hume has been quoted as evincing the calmness with which a Deist can die ; but if you examine carefully that case, I strongly suspect you will come to the conclusion that Hume was only an actor, a hypocrite, on his death bed ; and that the gay and sportive manner which he assumed, was but the covering which pride threw over the workings of his terrified spirit. Paine too, in one of the last hours of his life, could revile the adorable name of Jesus, and, in the spirit of fiendlike malignity, bid one of the ministers of Jesus depart from his presence ; and yet to those who watched him narrowly, there were indications not to be misunderstood, that he had already fallen into the hands of his own conscience, and that he needed no one to tell him that he was soon to fall into the hands of the living God. And well do I remember the case of another individual, scarcely less gifted in his intellect, or less degraded in his life, or less bold in his blasphemy, than Paine, who, when he saw that the hand of death was upon him, showed clearly enough, with all his efforts at concealment, that he regarded it a horrible thing to die. But there are cases innumerable in which conscience so far gets the better of pride, that there is not even an attempt to conceal the inward agony ; and that system which had even been gloried in in health, is pronounced worthless in death ; and the soul eagerly and tremblingly asks the way to the cross, if, by any means, it may feel the efficacy of atoning blood, before it shall have



passed out of the dark valley. Tell me not then of the fearlessness of the Deist in respect to the future, till you have seen how he can die ; for however much he may, in the season of health, vaunt his unconcern about dying, it is more than probable that he will show himself a coward, when he sees that the conflict is no longer to be put off ; and you need not wonder if black despair should seize upon him, and he should turn away from the offers of mercy, not because he any longer doubts their reality, but because his struggling spirit will have it that it has already received the impress of reprobation. I appeal to instances which have fallen under my own observation,—I appeal with equal confidence to the experience of almost every minister of Christ,—for evidence of the fact that the hour which closes the infidel's life is, frequently to say the least, an hour of unutterable anguish ; and that comparatively few of this class leave the world, without, in some way or other, rendering a distinct homage to the truth and value of the gospel.

From these scenes of agony and horror which the infidel's death bed so often presents, turn your eye for a moment upon what is passing in the chamber of the dying Christian. I do not assert that the death bed of every Christian presents a scene of triumph ; for well do I know that there are instances in which the Christian in his last hour is oppressed with doubt and anxiety ; but then he is doubtful and anxious, not in respect to the truth of the gospel, but in respect to the reality of his own experience of its regenerating power. I assert, without the fear of contradiction, that an instance never occurred, in which an individual, who had been accustomed even to yield a *speculative* assent to the truths of Christianity, was harrassed with doubts in respect to the safety of resting his hope upon them when he came to



die,—much as he may have shuddered from an apprehension that he was passing into eternity under the weight of the unbeliever's condemnation. But while it is conceded that even the true Christian does not *always* die in triumph, the infidel himself will scarcely deny that such events are of very frequent occurrence; that in every age the great mass of the sincere and humble followers of Christ have shown themselves courageous at the last, and many of them have left the world with the language of triumph on their lips. I point you to the naturally timid and sensitive female, struggling in her dying agony; and ask you to observe how even she, unsustained as she is by natural fortitude, can meet the king of terrors with a smile. Notice how her eye kindles with animation, how her heart beats with transport, how her almost stiffened tongue utters forth her Redeemer's praise, while her faith contemplates the "swelling floods" as almost past, and lingers joyfully upon the "sweet fields" that bloom and smile beyond them. I see at her bed-side a husband and children, whom she has tenderly loved, and whom she still loves as tenderly as ever, whose tears are streaming, and whose hearts are bursting, at the thought of the approaching separation; but she calmly and sweetly blesses them in death, and bids them prepare to follow in the upward track of her triumphant spirit. She dies with "Victory" upon her lips; with "Victory" in her soul; and the moment of her departure is a moment of so much ecstasy that one might easily enough imagine that a tide of thrilling melody flowed down to earth from the harps of the ransomed, as the everlasting gates were lifted up to receive the glorified spirit. And if this does not suffice to illustrate the triumphs of Christianity in death, let me conduct you to the martyr's stake; where all the gloomy

preparation has been made for subjecting not only the believer's faith, but his very body, to a fiery trial. You see there a man of the same flesh and blood, the same nerves and sinews, the same susceptibilities of bodily suffering, with yourself, standing still and praising Jesus in the fire; from the flames that encircle him he testifies with an unearthly eloquence to the power of his Redeemer's love and grace; and this is the enrapturing theme upon which his spirit lingers, while its earthly tenement is gradually burning down, and the angels are waiting to bear it off to Heaven. Here is the horror, and here the glory, of martyrdom. It is Christianity that triumphs amidst this scene of torture. She nerves the martyr's arm that he can hold it steadily in the fire. She puts courage into the martyr's bosom that he can look calmly on the burning fagots which are to eat up his flesh. She inspires the martyr's tongue, that he can speak forth his Redeemer's praises, till his tongue has faltered in the flames. Deism—I say it with confidence—has no such triumphs to boast: these are the legitimate, the peculiar, triumphs of Christianity.

In the review of our subject we may remark,

1. *What unspeakable folly do they evince who wish that Christianity may not be true!*

And wherefore is it that any indulge such a wish? It is because they have internal admonitions which they cannot resist, that disaster and ruin wait upon a life of sin; and they foolishly imagine that Christianity is the author of the terrors which they experience; and that, if they could only be satisfied that her claims were unfounded, they might give their apprehensions to the winds, and sin without remorse and without restraint. But never was there a madder delusion. These inward reproaches and gloomy forebodings which so often wound

the sinner's peace and darken his path, result from Natural Religion: they are the testimony of God against sin inscribed upon man's moral nature; and though Christianity confirms the fact to which this testimony relates,—viz, that man is a sinner,—yet she is in no way responsible for it. If she had never had an existence, it would have been just as true as it now is, that man has exposed himself to the wrath of God; and conscience would sometimes have intimated to him dark things in respect to his destiny. It is Natural Religion then that speaks terror to the sinner: it is the province of Christianity to provide an antidote against it. She comes as a messenger of salvation; with grace upon her lips, and mercy in her heart; and while she takes for granted the fearful reality of his condition, she offers pardon, deliverance, everlasting life. And he that believeth is actually delivered from the shudderings of guilt, and is henceforth sustained and cheered by a living hope of immortal glory.

Do you wish, vain mortal, that Christianity may not be true? But are you ready to encounter the consequences of its not being true? Are you willing to be left at the mercy of Natural Religion, when Natural Religion has nothing to proclaim to you but a message of wrath? Are you willing that the justice of God should take its course in the punishment of your transgressions? Are you willing to sit down under the gnawings of the worm that never dies, without any means of arresting its deadly corrosions? If not, then Christianity is your only hope; and in wishing that Christianity may prove a fable, what better do you than invoke upon yourself the horrors of despair?

2. *How preposterous is it to remain voluntarily undecided in respect to the truth of Christianity!*

You do not act thus in matters of much less importance. Suppose you were to be told, upon authority which you had no particular reason to discredit, that some great temporal evil was hanging over you, which it was yet in your power to avert by the adoption of particular measures which were recommended: or suppose you were to be told, upon the same authority, that there was a splendid estate to which you were fairly entitled, and that there could be no question that an examination of the title would instantly put you in possession of it;—what, let me ask, would be the course which prudence would dictate to you in either of these cases? Would you turn your back upon the intelligence, and say that there might or might not be some great evil hanging over you,—that there might or might not be some splendid estate fairly belonging to you,—you should not give yourself the trouble to inquire; or would you not rather bend all your energies, if need be, to satisfy yourself whether the information were to be relied on? Would you even rest so long as there was a doubt whether the report of good or of evil which had reached you was worthy of acceptance? And would not your anxiety to determine this be heightened by the consideration, that the information had come to you through a medium which you had no particular reason to suspect? Wherefore then, I ask, should you adopt a different course in respect to the religion of Christ? That comes to you claiming to involve your everlasting interests; to be the grand remedy which Heaven has appointed for the disease of your moral nature;—the only means by which you can avert from yourself the horrors of an eternal death; and there is nothing connected with it that should



lead you hastily to conclude against its divine authority previous to an investigation : on the contrary, there is this at least in its favour,—that the great mass of those who have diligently examined it have been entirely satisfied of its divine origin ; and the wisest and best men of every age have been found among its advocates. I ask now, whether you can justify it to your Reason, to remain voluntarily in doubt respecting the claims of Christianity ? On the contrary, does not every principle of Reason require that you should become decided at once ? To remain in doubt on a subject which involves your most momentous interests, when all the means of forming a decision are within your reach, and when, by your own acknowledgment, a neglect to decide may bring after it remediless ruin,—what better is it than the height of madness ?

If there be any one class upon whose consideration I am more desirous of urging this point than upon any other, I confess that class consists of our young men. I am willing to believe that there is not one among you all, who has openly assumed the character of an opposer of Christianity ;—not one even who harbours a settled though silent conviction that it is a system of imposture ; but I greatly mistake if there are not those among you who have no fixed principles on this subject, merely because they have not given themselves the trouble to examine it ;—those who are willing to have the credit of believing the gospel, and yet have skepticism enough to neutralize its legitimate authority over the heart and conscience. Now let me tell you, so long as you remain in this undecided state, you deliberately jeopard every thing. If Christianity be true, your present state involves a practical rejection of the richest of all blessings. And besides, remember that there is but a single step from a state of doubt to a state of settled unbelief ; and



while you are madly dreaming of a sort of neutrality, you may find yourself, even to your own surprise, settled on infidel ground. Rest not then, I pray you, till you have satisfied yourself, even to the getting rid of the last doubt, whether the claims of the gospel are to be admitted. If the result of a patient and diligent examination be to convince you that the Bible does not contain a divine Revelation, then you may cast it to the winds, and walk in the light of your own Reason with some shadow of consistency: if it be to convince you that it does contain an authorized message from Heaven, then you are bound to receive and heed it, as you value the approbation, and dread the frown, of the King of kings: but to leave the question of its divine origin unsettled, and especially to act as if it were not true, when you have every reason to believe that it *is* true, were an outrage upon Reason which no one could defend in relation to any other subject, but at the expense of being considered a mad man.

Once more: *What better is he who makes war upon Christianity than the enemy of man?*

For is not he your enemy who would annihilate your best hopes, and bring suspense and despair in place of them? Is not he your enemy who would mock your anxious inquiries in respect to the forgiveness of your sins; who would take from you the only balm for a wounded conscience; who would dry up the fountain of salvation, and cut you off from every reasonable hope in God's mercy, and leave you to the terrors of his avenging justice? Is not he your enemy who would take from beneath your head the only pillow upon which you can rest in the day of sickness; the only consolation that can sustain you in the hour of bereavement, who would have you left alone in your anguish when your troubled heart pants for the support of an almighty arm?

Is he not your enemy who would hang around your death bed curtains of horror, and chill the last blood that passes through your veins, and leave you to the monster's mercy without any means of triumphing in the conflict? Is not he your enemy—is not he the enemy of man, who would seal up the only fountain of sanctifying influence, who would open the floodgates of immorality and crime, and shed the mildew of death upon the best hopes and interests of society?

Yes, I repeat, the infidel *is* the enemy of man. He is engaged in a deadly warfare against human happiness. In the system which he holds there is bound up a tremendous curse. And I should not obey the honest dictates of my conscience to-day, if I were not to caution especially you who are young to have no fellowship with these unfruitful works of darkness. If you wish to try a mad experiment, take burning coals into your bosom, or make your bed in a den of vipers, or try to hang by a hair over a frightful precipice; but oh venture not upon an experiment so desperately hazardous as that of holding communion with those who oppose and revile Christianity. Believe me, you would jeopard far less to associate with the man who was watching an opportunity to mingle poison with your food, or plunge a dagger into your bosom; for while *his* aim would be only to kill the body, *they* are labouring for the destruction of the soul. If they *will* persist in their mad career, show them that you are not to be taken in their snares. If the altars which they have erected to the prince of darkness must continue to smoke with the blood of souls, let it not be told, either in this world or any other, that you are among the victims. Take refuge from their wiles in a practical belief of the gospel of Christ; and then you are safe, whoever may conspire to effect your ruin.

## LECTURE IV.

CHRISTIANITY CONTRASTED WITH MOHAMEDISM.

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ROMANS I. 16.

*I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ.*

IN CONNEXION WITH

I KINGS XIII. 18.

*He said—I am a prophet also—and an angel spake to me by the word of the Lord.—But he lied—*

Early in the seventh century, there arose an individual in one of the cities of Arabia, who formed the bold project of imposing, first upon his own countrymen, and ultimately upon the world, a new system of religion. In emerging from the obscurity to which Providence had consigned him by the circumstances of his early life, he claimed for himself the exalted character of a prophet of the Most High God; and pretended that through him was communicated to the world the last and most perfect of the divine revelations. His beginning was indeed small; for he laboured several years without obtaining any converts beyond the circle of his near relatives; while his pretensions were met by the indignation of some, the ridicule of others, and the un-

belief of almost all. Nothing daunted, however, by opposition, or discouraged by the want of success, he persevered in his enterprise till the great mass of his countrymen, either through the power of persuasion or at the point of the sword, had recognised his claim to a divine commission, and embraced the faith which he promulgated. Nay, the standard which he had raised in Arabia, was, at no distant period, planted in several of the surrounding countries; and though death terminated his career while many of his plans remained unaccomplished, yet his cause did not die with him; but continued to gather strength by fresh victories, till it had gained to itself a large portion of the Eastern world. He who, at the end of the first few years of his experiment, was almost universally ridiculed as a fanatic, or detested as an impostor, was, within less than a century from that time, hailed by whole nations as God's last Messenger, and man's best Benefactor; and now, after the lapse of more than eleven hundred years, the system which he introduced has lost none of its power over the nations which have received it, and is actually at this hour the religion of about one tenth of the population of the globe. It is scarcely necessary to say that the individual to whom I refer is MOHAMED.

Whoever is at all acquainted with the history of the war against Christianity, as it has been carried on by infidels for the last two centuries, must be aware how much they have triumphed in the supposed parallelism between the religion of Christ and that of Mohamed, in respect to the rapidity and extent of their early propagation. And it must be acknowledged that there is something in this parallelism which is adapted, at first view, to startle an unreflecting mind; though, if the feeling of anxiety which is thus created be analyzed, it

will always be found to originate in the false impression that success is the test of truth. In contrasting the two systems, as I am about to do in this discourse, I shall hope to show you that they have but little in common; that, while there is every thing in Mohamedism to stamp it with a mere earthly character, there is every thing in Christianity to indicate its divine original; that the latter rises to a higher degree of glory, and the former sinks to a deeper degradation, as they are contemplated in the light of each other.

*Let the religion of Jesus and the religion of Mohamed then be contrasted, in respect to*

I. THE GROUNDS OF THEIR AUTHORITY:

II. THE MEANS OF THEIR PROPAGATION:

III. THE CHARACTERS OF THEIR FOUNDERS:

IV. THEIR INFLUENCE ON THE WORLD.

I. THE GROUNDS OF THEIR AUTHORITY.

1. Mohamedism *makes no serious pretensions to miracles*: Christianity *appeals to miracles of a most decisive character*.

If we suppose God to have commissioned any individual to publish to the world truths which had before been hidden from it, or to confirm and illustrate those which had been obscurely revealed, it were reasonable to expect that he would enable him to give some satisfactory proof of his divine commission: and it is not easy to conceive of any proof more satisfactory than must result from the performance of miracles. Suppose, if you will, that we had no decisive evidence that God's revelations to the world are yet closed, and that some individual were to stand forth, at the present day, claiming to be an authorized messenger from Heaven, who had come to introduce a new dispensation,—he surely



would have no right to expect that his extraordinary pretensions would be admitted without evidence: but suppose he were to show himself in the act of putting forth a miraculous energy;—suppose, at his bidding, the dumb should speak, and the blind see, and the dead live, and the tempest die away into a calm,—should we not be obliged to say, ‘This man must be what he claims to be; for verily he could not do these mighty works unless God were with him. And as God cannot deny himself by lending his power to the aid of imposture, it is impossible but that the doctrine which he inculcates must be true.’ Though miracles can only prove the truth of any doctrine, or system of doctrine, indirectly, by proving the divine mission of Him who introduces it, yet the evidence which they furnish, as making an appeal not only to the judgment and feelings, but the very senses, is perhaps the highest of which the nature of the subject is susceptible.

But, I repeat, this is a species of evidence which Mohamedism has never seriously pretended to claim. It is true that the founder of the system did pretend to have received frequent communications from the angel Gabriel, and to have journeyed in the course of a single night from Mecca to Jerusalem, and thence to Heaven; and some have imagined that this was an artifice to satisfy the expectations of those who demanded some miracle as a proof of his mission; but be this as it might, the story is too absurd to admit of a sober refutation. The only miracle which Mohamed seems ever to have claimed, or his disciples to have claimed for him, or rather that which they regarded as a substitute for all miracles, was the Koran: here they maintained was to be found the perfection of moral sublimity and beauty;—every thing that could be desired to mark the signature

of Heaven. Without insisting upon the fact that it would be, to say the least, an extremely difficult matter to decide what amount of sublimity of thought and elegance of style would, of themselves, entitle any composition to be considered as divinely inspired, I shall here take for granted,—reserving the proof for a subsequent part of the discourse,—that even, on this ground, the claims of the Koran are at once unreasonable and arrogant. I do not say that the Koran is destitute of these qualities; but before we admit them as evidence of its divine inspiration, we must at least inquire how they came to belong to it, and with what other qualities they are associated. And even if it had been all that is claimed for it, it would not have been a miracle, nor could it have stood in place of miracles.

Christianity claims miracles of the most unexceptionable kind, and sustained by evidence which it is impossible successfully to gainsay. When Jesus entered upon his ministry, and began to preach the doctrine of the kingdom, he began at the same time to perform those mighty works which stamped his commission with the seal of divine authority. Though he was never prodigal of his miraculous power, never employed it for purposes to which it was not necessary, yet so frequently was it brought into exercise, that the visible controlling of the powers of nature seemed to be his every day employment. And while his miracles were as numerous as the highest incredulity could have demanded, they were performed in circumstances the most unfavourable to imposture;—in the broad light of day; often in the presence of many witnesses, and of those too who were most interested to disprove his claims; not to say that the miracles themselves were generally of such a nature as no impostor would have dared to attempt to imitate.

They were also of the most beneficent tendency;—were directed to the supply of human wants, and the relief of human wo;—were worthy in all respects of him, the design of whose mission into the world was to seek and save that which is lost. And finally, they were performed without any of that ostentatious parade with which imposture is so apt to surround itself: the pouring of light upon the path of the blind, the waking up of the dead from the sleep of the sepulchre, the assuaging of the elements when they were wrought into a tempest, was each effected by the same easy and natural exertion of power, with which he performed the most common actions of life. In short it is impossible to conceive of any thing which could have given additional strength to the evidence that the miracles of Jesus were the effect of a divine power dwelling in him.

But, as I have had occasion to remark in a previous discourse, the miracles which our Lord himself performed, are not the only ones which Christianity can claim; for when he left the world, and left his religion in the keeping of his disciples, he left with them the power of proving their commission as he had proved his own. And scarcely had he ascended to Heaven before a signal exhibition of this power was witnessed in the wonderful scenes of the day of Pentecost; when they found themselves able to adapt their ministrations to the multitude of foreigners by whom they were surrounded, by speaking a variety of languages which they had never learned. And subsequently, through the whole course of their ministry, this extraordinary power continued with them; and on no other principle can we account for the success which attended their labours. They went forth preaching the gospel, and proving by their mighty works that

they were divinely commissioned, and therefore that what they preached was the truth of God.

Does any one question the integrity of the Apostles, and say that their pretended miracles were founded in imposture? I answer, how came these miracles then to produce such mighty effect on minds of every description, and where there was the best opportunity of ascertaining their true character? How came these men to enlist in a cause which they must have known, if they had been impostors, would have been ruinous to themselves; and to persevere in it, with the certain prospect of no other temporal reward than the sacrifice of every earthly good? And how came it to pass that the most active and malignant enemies of Christianity, both among Jews and Gentiles, never called in question the existence of these miracles, but set themselves to account for them on principles which took for granted their reality? The very supposition of imposture is a contradiction of the first principles of Reason, and involves the grossest absurdity.

2. *Mohamedism pretends to prophecies; but her pretensions are destitute even of plausibility: Christianity appeals to prophecies of the most unexceptionable character.*

Some of the followers of Mohamed have professed to believe that certain prophecies of scripture point to him as a great and illustrious prophet; but this is claiming more for him, on the score of prophecy, than he ever ventured to claim for himself. He did indeed assert that the scriptures, in their original and uncorrupted form, abounded with predictions of the glory of his character and the greatness of his dominion; but he maintained that these predictions had all been expunged from the original record, owing to the extreme jealousy which had



prevailed, both among Jews and Christians, in the anticipation of his reign. The only evidence upon which this alleged fact is given to the world is his own declaration ; but who can contemplate the case for a moment, without perceiving the impossibility of such an occurrence ? For how could so remarkable a fact have taken place,—a fact in which such vast multitudes were most deeply interested, and yet not a vestige of tradition remain respecting it ? Besides, this fact supposes that *all* the copies of the scriptures in existence had been corrupted ;—but how was this consistent with the reverence with which the Jews regarded every word and letter of their inspired books, or with the watchful jealousy which Jews and Christians constantly cherished towards each other ? We do not deny that Mohamed and his religion are the subject of prophecy, at least in the New Testament ; but it is only in the character of a false prophet, and a false religion, that they are exhibited ; and to suppose that any other character was ever attributed to him, or to his system, in the prophetical scriptures, were at least “an enormous tax upon human credulity.”

Christianity is sustained, not by a single insulated prediction, or a few scattered predictions, of doubtful character, but by a whole system of prophecies extended continuously through several thousand years. With the very sentence of condemnation which succeeded man's original apostacy, was joined the promise of a Saviour ;—a promise which, however obscurely expressed, was still clear enough to be apprehended by those for whom it was more immediately designed : and that may be considered as the corner stone of a mighty fabrick which gradually grew up under the inspiration of the Almighty, till its summit was lost in the Heavens. Under the patriarchal dispensation, Christ was frequently, in some



form or other, the subject of prophecy ; and by this means the faith of the patriarchs was kept alive in a Saviour to come. From the introduction of the Mosaic economy, the predictions respecting him became more frequent and more clear ; and there was a distinct order of men qualified by a supernatural communion with Heaven to make known the divine will in respect to futurity ; and these revelations, which occupy no small part of the ancient scriptures, almost all relate, either immediately or remotely, to Jesus Christ. Here you will find his life, his death, his resurrection, his ascension, his intercession, his whole mediatorial work, described with such minute accuracy, that when you read the corresponding history in the New Testament, you read little but what you have already found in the form of prophecy in the Old. It should also be borne in mind that many of the great events of scripture, and particularly the whole typical economy, had all the force of predictions respecting Messiah and his kingdom. Indeed any interpretation of the Old Testament which does not recognise Christ as the sum and substance of all its revelations, every thing else being subordinate to this great subject, would indicate, to say the least, a most unenviable facility at wresting the scriptures.

I might say too that Jesus was not only the subject of prophecy, but was himself, in the strictest sense, a prophet. Witness his memorable predictions in respect to the destruction of Jerusalem, which, according to the testimony of profane writers, had a most exact accomplishment. And his beloved disciple to whom he imparted the gift of prophecy, after his ascension, disclosing to him his own secret purposes as Head of the Church, has given to the world a book which contains a compendious account of all that is to be ;—a book over which

a veil is even now, to some extent, drawn, but which is becoming more clear with the lapse of ages, and is destined ere long, as every thing indicates, to receive a full interpretation from the Providence of God. Who that is capable of estimating evidence will doubt that to Christianity belongs the Spirit of Prophecy ; inasmuch as all its leading facts were the subject of the most unequivocal predictions, and as its great Author not only possessed this Spirit himself, but imparted it also to others ?

3. The Koran *bears no internal marks of being a divine revelation* : the Bible *exhibits evidence of this which is overwhelming*.

Observe the contrast which the two present in respect to internal *consistency*. The Koran is inconsistent with *itself* ; here representing the character of God in the sublimity and majesty which really belong to it, and there attributing to it qualities which would debase the character of a human being ; on one page recommending and enjoining the practice of the moral virtues, on another inculcating principles whose legitimate operation is to create a thirst for tyranny and blood. It is inconsistent also with *preceding revelations*, which it professes to acknowledge :—not to specify other particulars, it denies that fundamental fact in the New Testament history—the crucifixion of Jesus Christ ; and maintains that the whole scene of his supposed crucifixion was merely a delusion. The Bible, on the other hand, is perfectly consistent ;—the New Testament with the old, and each part with every other part. All its doctrines and precepts, its predictions and histories, perfectly accord with each other, and go to constitute a magnificent system, in which the most critical eye can detect no disproportion. I do not say indeed that the superficial stu-

dent of the Bible may not fancy that he sometimes finds contradictions; but let him apply himself with docility, and humility, and diligence, and he will find his difficulties gradually clearing away; and will be struck with the fact that, not only many of those passages which, at first view, seemed inconsistent with each other, are in perfect harmony, but that out of that harmony arises the most satisfying evidence of the authenticity of the entire scriptures.

One circumstance which gives additional force to this point of the contrast between the Koran and the Bible, is the manner in which they were respectively given to the world. The former was all professedly revealed to one person, within the short space of twenty-three years: the latter, to many persons, in different countries, and at various periods, through the long space of nearly the same number of centuries. One might suppose that it would be a comparatively easy matter for an individual,—especially one who claimed to be divinely inspired, to write a book which should at least be consistent with itself; but that so many individuals as were concerned in writing the Bible, educated at different periods and under different influences, and writing in different countries and even under different religious dispensations, should have concurred in producing a book between whose various parts there is no real discrepancy, must be allowed at least to constitute an anomaly in human experience. Under these circumstances would it not be reasonable to expect, on principles of mere human calculation, that the Koran would exhibit far greater internal consistency than the Bible? And yet precisely the reverse of this is true:—the Bible is all consistency; the Koran abounds with contradiction.

Not less striking is the contrast in the *moral tendency* of these two books. That the Koran contains much which is unexceptionable and excellent I have already admitted; particularly some of the views which it presents of the divine character are adapted to exert an elevating influence: but then there are other parts of it whose tendency is, in the highest degree, degrading; and, on the whole, it is fitted to corrupt and brutalize, rather than purify and exalt. To say nothing of the gross and grovelling representations of the divine character which are strangely mixed with much that we cannot fail to approve,—the views which it presents of Heaven are adapted, above any thing else we can imagine, to sensualize the whole man. And then the course of conduct of which Heaven was to be the reward, though it was worthy enough of the reward which was promised, was a violation of the first dictates of Natural Religion. He who was most bold and desperate in fighting the battles of Mohamed, and in exterminating those who should oppose his reign, was encouraged to expect the highest enjoyments of his sensual paradise. And the moral precepts of the Koran partake of the same character with its doctrines;—some of them indeed such as Reason and Scripture approve, but others justifying, and even inculcating, the most vicious indulgences. It were not possible indeed for any individual to become in all respects what the Koran requires, because it requires things which are utterly inconsistent with each other; but no one who reads it impartially, can doubt that, on the whole, it falls in with the corrupt tendencies of the human heart. But the influences of the Bible, are all pure, benign, elevated. The views which it presents of the character of God, of a future state of rewards and punishments, and above all of the work of redemption by



Jesus Christ, when practically received, are all fitted to cast the soul into a heavenly mould. In all that it requires, and in all that it forbids, it is in full accordance with the dictates of enlightened Reason ; and he who conforms most closely to its requisitions, approaches most nearly to the perfection of moral excellence.

The Koran makes its highest pretensions on the score of *beauty* and *sublimity* ; but even here it admits not of comparison with the scriptures. I do not deny that it contains some fine passages ;—that there are scattered through it noble conceptions put forth in beautifully appropriate language ; but I maintain, and I am sure that every person who candidly examines it must admit, that, in every thing which it has not derived from the Bible, it is greatly inferior to the Bible ; and not only so, but it contains much that is superlatively grovelling and ridiculous. The scriptures, on the other hand, are always dignified ; and they contain innumerable specimens of eloquent composition, compared with which the finest specimens in the Koran which are not immediately borrowed from scripture, are only as the glimmering of twilight to the brightness of noon-day. In reading the Koran, while you find much to awaken admiration, you find not less to excite disgust ; but in reading the Bible, you are never shocked by a transition from what is beautiful and majestic to what is gross and insipid. You are always in the region of perspicuous statements, splendid conceptions, or beautiful illustrations.

And finally under this article, the Koran is little more than a mere *compilation*, while the Bible possesses in the highest degree the merit of *originality*. Whatever is truly great and excellent in the Koran, you may trace directly to the sacred scriptures ; and you will always find that, just in proportion as the original sentiment or



language is modified, the beauty and force, either of the thought or expression, is diminished. Beside the copious extracts which it has made from the Bible, it has drawn largely from the Talmudical legends of the Jews, from the Apocryphal Gospels which were then circulating among the Christians of the East, and from the absurd and ridiculous fables which were current among the idolaters of Arabia. The materials collected from these several sources seem to have been thrown together without even an attempt at order; and the result is palmed upon the world as an original revelation from Heaven. But to what source, let me ask, will you trace any thing that you find in the Bible, other than that from which it professes to have been derived? When some portions of this book were written, there were heathen writers of distinguished name in existence, some of whose productions have come down to us as the glory of Pagan antiquity: but who can compare the writings of David or Isaiah with the most splendid Pagan models, without perceiving that the former are infinitely unlike, infinitely superior to, the latter? Even the most learned and wary enemies of the Bible have never yet adduced a particle of evidence that those by whom it was penned were chargeable with plagiarism; and I may safely say that, after all the efforts to prove this that ever *can* be made, it will still stand forth to the world with the merit of the highest possible originality.

We proceed to the next general point of contrast between the two systems—viz:

## II. THE MEANS OF THEIR PROPAGATION.

1. Mohamedism *was introduced at a period when every thing in the state of the world was favourable to its extension*: Christianity, *at a period when the*

*state of the world opposed the greatest obstacles to its success.*

Mohamedism was greatly assisted in its introduction by the deplorable state of the *Christian church*. As early as the second century, commenced, in a very perceptible degree, the departure from the simplicity that is in Christ; and long before the rise of Mohamed, the primitive glory of the church had become entirely obscured, and in place of it had come a deluge of ignorance, error, superstition and iniquity. The doctrines of the gospel were completely buried under a mass of metaphysical jargon. Its precepts were entirely lost sight of, its spirit seemed absolutely annihilated, in the fierce contentions which were carried on about matters which never could be settled, and if they could have been, were of no practical moment. Its institutions had been so frightfully moulded by the hand of superstition, that every original feature of beauty or usefulness had disappeared; and instead of the simple rites which the Master had instituted, there was a cumbrous load of ceremonies to be endured, equally intolerable for its weight, and ridiculous for its absurdity. Both learning and piety had become nearly extinct; and the little that remained was immured chiefly in the cells of the monks, and shed scarcely any benign influence upon the world. So profound was the ignorance even of the bishops themselves, that they were incapable of writing the sermons which, by their office, they were occasionally obliged to preach. And it had been well if nothing worse than ignorance could have been laid to their charge; but their whole conduct evinced not only an utter destitution of the spirit of piety, but the prevalence in no common degree, and in its most odious forms, of the spirit of the world. Indeed it is not easy to draw a picture so dark that it shall

be an exaggerated representation of the deplorable state of the Christian church at the beginning of the seventh century.

You will readily perceive that all this was favourable to the success of Mohamed. Had Christianity shone out upon the world in her native simplicity and with all her primitive attractions, she would have shed around her a light which would have exposed the odious features of his system, so that it would have been crushed in the very first attempt to introduce it. She would have had within herself a power over the understandings, and consciences, and hearts, of men, which would have effectually prevented their being drawn away by the arts of fanatical imposture. But in view of the corrupted form in which Christianity then existed, Mohamed might, with some show of reason urge upon his countrymen the adoption of another system. He might point to the vain and yet bitter controversies by which the Christian church was continually distracted, to the mass of absurd and foolish ceremonies by which it was encumbered, to the strifes for pre-eminence which were constantly going forward among the higher orders of ecclesiastics, to the spirit of pride, and animosity, and detraction, which every where prevailed, as evidence that a new religion was demanded; and each of these melancholy features in the state of the church was adapted to facilitate its introduction. Mohamed artfully availed himself of all these circumstances, to aid in carrying forward his enterprise; and if these facilities had not existed, we may safely say that his enterprise never could have succeeded.

And while there was so much in the general state of the Christian church to favour the introduction of Mohamedism, there was a powerful concurrent influence to

the same end from the social, civil, and religious condition of Arabia. The Arabians were, at that time, as they have been since, for the most part, an ignorant people ; and the inhabitants of Mecca—the city where Mohamed first promulgated his system—were distinguished in this respect even above the rest of their countrymen : of course, as ignorance is always favourable to the success of imposture, Mohamed must have found in this a powerful auxiliary to the accomplishment of his purposes. Besides, there was no one religious system which greatly prevailed above others ; but the inhabitants were divided between Judaism, Christianity and Idolatry ; the two former being of course greatly corrupted, and the latter nothing better than a system of mere corruption. Had the Arabians generally been united in any one of these systems, however corrupt it might have been, no doubt they would have successfully resisted the pretensions of Mohamed ; but as union is strength, so disunion is weakness ; and hence the resistance which they made was comparatively feeble. And the same remark applies to the civil, as to the religious, state of the country : Had the inhabitants all been united under a single government, it would have been an easy matter to have thrown Mohamed and his system at once beyond the hope of success ; but Arabia was, at that time, the seat of many different governments, between which there prevailed no small degree of hostility ; and hence there was no such thing as united action against a common enemy. Even after Mohamed had made some progress in his daring enterprise, if they could have risen in the majesty of a united people, they might have thrown off the yoke which they were then receiving, and have crushed the pretender in the dust. But there was no union among them ; and Mohamed saw this, and



turned it to the best account in uniting them under his own bloody sceptre.

Thus, whether we consider the deplorable condition of the Christian church, or the distracted religious and political state of Arabia, at the period of the introduction of Mohamedism, we are brought to the conclusion that every thing in the general state of the world was favourable to its establishment.

Now glance, for a moment, at the condition of the world when Christianity was introduced, and see what mighty obstacles there were to her success ;—obstacles which must have been entirely insuperable, by any arts of imposture, or any energy distinct from Omnipotence. The period, you will recollect, was one in which the intellectual firmament was most thickly studded with the lights of Learning and Philosophy. It was amidst all the glories of the Augustan age, when Virgil's muse had but just become silent, and Tully's voice had scarcely died away in the Senate House, and a host of illustrious orators and philosophers had lifted Rome to her highest pitch of glory, that Christianity stood forth before the world, claiming to be a Religion from Heaven. Do you not perceive at once that this was just the most unpropitious time which an impostor could have chosen for the accomplishment of his purposes ? It was a time when nothing new would be received without diligent inquiry ; and especially when nothing that purported to involve the highest interests of man could be admitted, till its claims were fully examined. Yes, Christianity, in her very infancy, was brought into the broad bright light of the most intellectual age which the world has ever seen ; and we may confidently appeal to the fact that she endured that test, as evidence that there was no test which she could not endure.



And then look at the *religious* state of the world, and see how every thing *there* also conspired to oppose the introduction of Christianity. The *Jews* had indeed so far understood their own prophecies, that they were at that time looking earnestly for a Messiah ; but they had also so far perverted them, that they expected nothing more in him than a temporal Prince. It had been with their nation the dream of ages that when Messiah should come, he would deliver them from the ignoble bondage into which they were cast, and exalt them at once to national greatness and glory ; and no expectation could, more effectually than this, have prepared them for an indignant rejection of the claims of Jesus. In addition to this, they had become more degenerate perhaps than at almost any preceding period of their history ; had not only grossly corrupted the doctrines of their religion, and converted it into what was little better than a system of mere senseless observances, but they had become proportionably lax in their morality, and were not prevented by shame, or remorse, or any other principle, from the most open and flagrant outrages of the divine law ;—all which must of course have greatly disinclined them to the deep and all pervading spirituality which was enjoined by the gospel. And the moral state of the *Gentiles* was even still more deplorable. Their philosophers, and poets, and statesmen, who, in different ways became guides in matters of religion, were, for the most part, utterly skeptical in respect to the first principles of religion ; and held a system, if system it could be called, which, to all practical purposes, was scarcely better than Atheism. And their morals were the counterpart of their doctrines ;—a perpetual war upon the first principles of morals ;—the unblushing practice of every form of vice which a depraved ingenuity could invent. Judge

ye whether such a state of things would be likely to facilitate the introduction of such a religion as Christianity. Is it in accordance with the established laws of human nature, that men readily yield to that which opposes the whole current of their prejudices, and habits and inclinations?

And while the condition of the Jews and Romans, separately considered, opposed a formidable obstacle to the introduction of the gospel, yet another obstacle existed in the disposition which the two nations cherished towards each other. The Romans had long regarded the Jews with the strongest aversion, not so much on account of the peculiarities of their religion, as because they spurned at their claims as a distinct and peculiar people; and having gained the mastery over them, they subjected them to a yoke which was by no means easy to be borne; while the Jews, on the other hand, cherished an inveterate hostility against the Romans, not only as being the enemies of their religion and the authors of their bondage, but as having afflicted them by the most unreasonable and oppressive exactions. You will instantly perceive how this mutual hostility was fitted to impede the introduction of Christianity; especially how it would naturally operate to make the Romans turn away with disgust from a religion which claimed to be of Jewish origin.

I ask now, was not every thing in the state of the world unfavourable to the success of the gospel at the period of its introduction? Can you conceive of any greater obstacles than it had to encounter; any greater obstacles than it *did* encounter, and yet survive in triumph?

2. Mohamedism *artfully accommodated itself to the prejudices and passions of men*: Christianity *directly contravened them*.

In the system which Mohamed introduced there was much to gratify the pride of the intellect. While he retained that great fundamental principle—the unity of God, and professed that it was one leading object of his mission to restore it from the corruption and obscurity into which it had been thrown, he rejected all the essential truths of Christianity. The doctrine of the Trinity, of the deity and atonement of Jesus Christ, of justification by faith, and sanctification by the Spirit, in short all those truths which are peculiarly evangelical, and which require human Reason to yield up her lofty pretensions and to believe on the simple authority of ‘Thus saith the Lord;’—make no part of the Mohamedan creed. Whatever absurdities his followers may have to receive upon his own authority,—and they are neither few nor small,—he aims to bring down the doctrines of religion to a level with their comprehension; and the offence of the cross he has studiously kept out of their way. So also he has consulted the depraved inclinations and sensual appetites of men; especially in his doctrine of rewards and punishments; representing the joys of Heaven to consist in a course of unbounded sensual indulgence, and the miseries of Hell in a scene of mere physical deprivation and torture. In short, his system was most warily devised to appeal to the hopes and fears of man as a sensual being: he well knew by experience as well as observation the power of the animal appetites; and the importance which he gave to this was not less an evidence of his sagacity than a means of his success.

I have spoken of Mohamedism as falling in with the general tendencies of man's corrupt nature: let me speak of it now more particularly as being accommodated to the different religious classes to whom it was addressed. Mohamed did not pretend to offer to the world a new religion, distinct from all that had preceded it, or that then existed; on the contrary, he professed to recognise the existence of the other prevailing systems, and to incorporate whatever was true and useful in them into his own. With the Jew he maintained the divine authority of the Old Testament scriptures and the institutions of Moses; with the Christian he acknowledged the divine mission of Jesus Christ and the truth of the gospel; and the idolater he flattered into the reception of his system by professedly leaving him to his idolatrous ceremonies, and endeavouring to render them in some instances more impressive and imposing. In this way provision was made for conciliating the several classes; so that the Jew, the Pagan, and the Christian, could all unite in a system which seemed to recognise the peculiarities of each, and professed to be an improvement upon all.

Christianity, whether considered in reference to the general corrupt tendencies of human nature, or to the particular prejudices which existed among different classes, never manifested in the least degree a spirit of accommodation. She proclaimed doctrines which were pre-eminently fitted to humble the pride of the intellect,—doctrines too deep for human Reason to fathom; and yet she required that they should be implicitly received on the simple testimony of God. She enjoined duties which were at war with every corrupt principle of our nature, and required the performance of them on the penalty of everlasting death. She fearlessly attacked

sin in every form and in every condition, and was as unsparing in her denunciations upon impenitence among the great and the mighty as the insignificant and obscure. She would not consent to the least modification of the terms on which her blessings were offered; and she distinctly and every where proclaimed, that any thing short of repentance towards God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, would leave man to encounter the woes of the second death.

The two great classes with which Christianity was conversant were Jews and Heathen; but in respect to neither of them did she ever exhibit the semblance of a compromising spirit. Upon the two leading sects among the Jews she early, and steadily, and perseveringly, made war; encountering the infidelity of the Sadducees with the doctrine of a future state and the resurrection from the dead, and the self-righteousness of the Pharisees with the most searching and pungent exhibitions of the rottenness of their character. The Gentiles would have readily enough received her, if they had not been offended by her exclusiveness: if she would have consented to come in on the same terms with the many other systems which were in vogue among them, no doubt she might have been tolerated, and might have taken her chance for becoming the popular religion: but she had no ear for the voice of flattery; she could not live among systems of idolatry for any other purpose than to demolish them; and her intention to do this,—to assail the very principalities of Paganism, she proclaimed from the house tops. She told the world at the outset what she had come to do; and, whether among Jews or Gentiles, she remained inflexible in her purpose to do it. Does not this look as if she were conscious that she had power to withstand all the opposition which



an honest avowal of her purposes would awaken? Does it not indicate a full conviction that she had no occasion, as certainly she had no disposition, to abate at all from the holiness of her requisitions? If she had not felt that she was girded with Omnipotence, would she not, at least in the beginning, have shown herself more timid and compromising? Would not Mohamed have inevitably ruined his cause, if he had commenced his career by thus openly and boldly opposing the strongest passions and propensities of human nature?

3. Mohamedism *made great use of national pride : Christianity mortified it.*

We all know with how much power this principle sometimes operates; how, for a time, it gets complete dominion of the soul; and, in the bright visions of a country's glory, the ties of near relationship, and all private and personal interests, are forgotten. It was a feeling of patriotism, of the most hallowed kind indeed, which led to that beautiful exclamation of the devout Psalmist, while he was mourning amidst the scenes of his captivity—"If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning; if I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy." And who especially that has ever been in a distant land, with the ocean rolling between him and his father's sepulchres, has not felt his bosom thrill at the thought of his native country, and heard her praises spoken with as much delight, and her honour assailed with as much indignation, as if the voice of eulogy or the voice of detraction had been lifted in respect to his bosom friend? To this principle, so powerful in its operations, Mohamed constantly appealed; and that too under circumstances the most favourable to his success. The Arabians as a na-

tion had long been in a depressed state, and had even been distinguished for ignorance and barbarism; and when the thought of an extensive dominion was suggested to them, it came over them with an exhilarating freshness which at once prepared them for bold and vigorous action. Looking down the vista of years, they saw their country rising from the dust, and girding herself with glory; and as her victorious leader advanced in his march, they beheld the surrounding nations paying their homage at his feet. Naturally fierce and warlike, they valued most the laurels that were gathered in battle and dyed with blood; and in the prospect of victory in the cause of their country's greatness, the thought of dying became too unimportant to occupy them for a moment. Mohamed kept their eye steadily fixed on this dazzling object; he cheered them at every step by the reflection that they were moving onward to national glory; and as they beheld their expectations gradually realized, they gathered fresh courage to encounter fresh opposition.

Christianity, instead of bringing the principle of national pride to her aid, met it with a most cutting rebuke. The Jews were proud enough of the distinction they had already enjoyed for so many ages as the peculiar people of God; but it was the future coming of Messiah as a victorious temporal prince, to deliver them from the Roman yoke, and raise them to more than their ancient greatness, which constituted the object of their highest ambition. And the time had come which their own prophecies had marked out as the period of his advent. It was just when every heart was beating in joyful expectation of the illustrious personage who was coming, as they imagined, to effect their deliverance, that Jesus appeared; and his very first business was, not to flatter, but to humble, them;—not to remind them of the glory

of the past, and to cheer them onward by pointing to the still brighter glory of the future, but to pour mildew on hopes which had been the steady and luxuriant growth of ages. He distinctly claimed to be, as he most unequivocally proved himself, the promised Messiah; and he bid them terminate their wild dreams of temporal distinction by assuring them that his kingdom was not of this world. He moved about, not in the splendours of royalty, but in the habiliments of poverty; and instead of being greeted by the homage of the multitude while he was sitting on a throne, he was insulted by their execrations while he was dying on a cross. So strong and so universal was the expectation of a temporal deliverer, that even his own immediate disciples had eagerly embraced it; and they held it fast even through the scenes of his crucifixion, and up to the time of his ascension into Heaven. Here again, what but a consciousness of his own power to carry forward his own work, could have led him to strike such a withering blow at the strongest hopes of the nation? Would Mohamed have dared in this respect to walk in the steps of the Author of Christianity?

4. *Mohamedism was imposed upon the world by a conquering tyrant: Christianity owed her establishment principally to the labours of a few illiterate fishermen.*

Mohamed did not indeed, at the commencement of his career, take up the sword; for then he was single handed; and if he had taken the sword, he must inevitably have perished by the sword. He knew that the foundation of his ultimate success must be laid by the arts of persuasion; and these arts he diligently practised, first among his own kindred, and then on a more extended scale, as he could gain opportunity. At length, after

years of laborious effort, during which he never claimed the right of using any other power for the propagation of his system than that of argument, his cause had gained so much strength that he ventured to announce to the world that God had commissioned him to resort to military force; to compel by war and conquest, not only his own countrymen but the inhabitants of other countries, to an acknowledgment of his doctrines and a submission to his authority. And now the soft voice of flattery yielded to the stern voice of tyranny; and he who a little before was bland, and gentle, and even importunate in his solicitations of favour, now rose in the sternness of a despot, and claimed every thing as a right; and the tocsin of war was sounded; and the bloody standard was unfurled; and his deluded followers on every side rushed to it with a degree of phrensied exultation which showed that they stood ready, at the bidding of their leader, to march into the jaws of death. The man who has spent so much of his life in a cave in intimate communion with the Most High, and so much of it in quietly expounding his system to his fellow men, is now at the head of a mighty army and accoutred for bloody conflict; and they who were once brave to ridicule him when they talked of his pretensions, have become timid; and they who have not been convinced by his arguments, cannot withstand the terror of his sword. 'Yield or die' was his language to every idolater; 'Yield or pay tribute,' his language to every Christian; and so powerful had he become, that there remained no hope of successfully resisting his authority. Even the princes and potentates of other countries received from him the same humiliating alternative; and so terrifick was his very name, that it made their hearts throb and their ears tingle; and, in some instan-



ces, without a moment's hesitation, they yielded to his despotick mandate. It was indeed a summary way of making converts, to point his sword at a man's bosom, and tell him that he should look upon his own heart's blood the next moment, if he refused to acknowledge the Prophet's authority.

What a delightful contrast to this violent and bloody procedure is found in the early history of Christianity ! That history indeed records many scenes of desperate cruelty ; but it was cruelty exercised not *by* Jesus or his followers, but *towards* them. There were rivers of blood shed during the first centuries ; but it was the blood of those who counted not their lives dear to them that they might become witnesses for the truth ; and like Abel's blood, it had a voice which reached even to Heaven. Who can read the history of Jesus without being impressed with the fact that the fiercer passions had no dominion over him ? And so far was he from lending his sanction to deeds of violence, or even seeming to connive at them, that he rebuked Peter for taking up the sword even in his Master's defence, and instantly put forth his divine energy to heal the wound which that rash disciple had caused. He was a meek, humble and unassuming man ; and though he was inflexible in his purposes, and peremptory in his claims,—nay, though he openly declared that he had come to demolish the strong holds of sin, and wrest Satan's empire out of his hands, yet the only instrumentality that he chose to employ, leaving out of view his miraculous works, were Truth and Reason. As he preached the doctrine of the kingdom and authenticated his commission by his mighty works, many believed his doctrine, and bowed to his authority. And his Apostles too, in whose hands he left the work which he had himself begun, had nothing to



rely on but the power of truth and the power of the Spirit. They were commanded to go forth and attack a world that was in arms against them; and they obeyed the command; but the weapons of their warfare were not carnal but spiritual. Many of them, as well as of those who immediately succeeded them, were the victims of heathen persecution; but the cause in which they suffered steadily advanced, and the blood of the martyrs proved to be the seed of the church. Only contemplate the condition of the Apostles at the moment their Master had left them,—solitary, weak, friendless, without reputation and without influence, and consider their ability with reference to the work which was given them to do,—the work which they actually accomplished;—and say whether the result of their efforts does not prove that they had the presence and aid of an Almighty arm. Is it in the nature of things that these men could have moved the world as they did, if the Power that made the world had not assisted them?

I ask you now, my friends, whether, in the review of this article, we are not fairly brought to the conclusion that, though the establishment of Mohamedism was in many respects an unparalleled event, yet there was nothing in it to involve the necessity of any super-human agency; that the establishment of Christianity on the other hand could have been nothing less than the result of an extraordinary divine interposition. Admit, if you please, the propagation of the one to have been as rapid as that of the other,—yet this fact amounts to nothing, apart from the character of the two systems, and the circumstances in which, and the means by which, they were introduced and extended. Henceforth then, let not the infidel, when I have expounded to him the argument for the truth of the gospel from its early propagation,

point me to the first triumphs of Mohamedism as bearing, in an equal degree, the impress of divine authority. At least let him not do this, till he has shown that the contrast which I have now presented has no foundation in truth; and especially that there is no difference between promulgating a religion at the head of an army and at the point of the sword, and promulgating it by a simple appeal to the understanding and heart.

We contrast these systems

### III. AS TO THE CHARACTERS OF THEIR FOUNDERS.

Much that might naturally fall under this division of the discourse, I have necessarily anticipated in speaking of the different courses of conduct which the two respectively pursued: there are several points, however, which deserve distinct consideration.

1. Mohamed *was grossly inconsistent*: Jesus *was a perfect model of consistency*.

No impostor ever yet exhibited throughout a consistent character; and we may safely say that no impostor ever will. If you will point me to a man who is bad enough to attempt to palm upon the world a system of religion which he knows to be false, I will point you to one whose corrupt inclinations are so strong that they will, occasionally at least, break through any artificial restraints that may be imposed upon them, so that, to a careful observer, the man will appear to be nothing better than he really is. And even where the open violations of moral principle are least frequent and least flagrant, the external sanctity which the hypocrite assumes is ordinarily quite distinguishable from the operations of genuine integrity. In the former, there is more of constraint, and usually more of extravagance: in the latter, there is an unaffected ease,—a natural flowing out of the feelings into the life,—the outward expression of the inward prin-

ciple, which no art can effectually, or, for a long time, counterfeit. In Mohamed you have a striking example of the one; in Jesus a perfect example of the other.

If you refer the character of Mohamed as a whole to any standard of morality which Reason or Conscience will recognise, you will be struck with the fact that there is a most revolting discrepancy between them: and then again, if you look at his conduct at different periods and under different circumstances, you cannot fail to perceive that his character was a mere tissue of contradictions. At one period, you find him dealing in the soft arts of persuasion, and professedly looking to nothing but truth and argument for the support of his claims; at another, brandishing the sword with terrific energy, and peremptorily demanding obedience or blood. Here you find him in the solitude of a cave, professedly receiving communications from Heaven; and there committing crimes, the bare recital of which would cause decency to blush, and humanity to shudder. He steadily maintains his claims as a Prophet of the Most High God; but in maintaining them exhibits a course of conduct in which he outrages every attribute of the divine character. What more glaring evidences of imposture could there be than are furnished by such inconsistencies?

But you may scrutinize the character of Jesus as closely as you will, and you shall find in it not the semblance of self-contradiction;—nothing that involves the slightest departure from the great rule by which he professed always to be governed. There are some *good* men, whose characters seem to be but imperfectly balanced; in whom great excellences and great defects are so blended that you scarcely know whether, on the whole, there is more to admire or to condemn; and in contemplating certain qualities which belong to them,

you are sometimes at loss whether you have in your eye a good quality so marred by an evil admixture as to be degenerating into a vice, or an evil quality so relieved and softened by the excellences with which it is associated as to have gathered in some degree the aspect of a virtue. But you have no such doubts in contemplating the character of Jesus. Here you find perfect virtue without the semblance of intellectual or moral weakness; an harmonious blending of *all* the virtues, without a single discordant quality to mar the beautiful proportion of the entire character. You are never offended by the wild glare of enthusiasm, or by the movements of an incautious and phrensied zeal, or by the mistakes of a weak and indiscriminating benevolence. You find no sacrifice either of the more heroick or the more humble virtues; but both so delightfully blended as to qualify and exalt each other. No matter in what condition Jesus was placed, he always adapted himself to it with perfect ease and success; and in contemplating his conduct, you never feel that he has done any thing that was wrong, or omitted any thing that was right. In short you have a character constituted with the most perfect moral proportions;—a character as incompatible with the idea of imposture, as the darkness of midnight would be with the shining of the sun in his strength.

2. Mohamed *exhibited a burning ambition*: Jesus *was perfectly unambitious*.

It is impossible to contemplate impartially Mohamed's career without arriving at the conclusion that the pole star that always guided him was his own personal aggrandizement; and, upon any other supposition, his whole course becomes utterly inexplicable. The passion for glory began to burn in his bosom while he was yet a youth, and while there was nothing in his circumstan-



ces that seemed to promise its gratification ; and under its influence he cast about him to devise some means of escaping from his obscurity, and rising to honour. He had the boldness to form a plan which contemplated an absolute dominion not only over the bodies but the souls of his fellow men ;—a plan which was to exalt him not only above the wisest and greatest men of his own generation, but above the wisest and greatest of all preceding generations, not excepting Moses and even Jesus himself. And in the execution of this plan, he overcame obstacles which, to a less daring spirit than his own, would have been absolutely insurmountable. When new difficulties arose, instead of even seeming to yield, he towered above them by an effort which even his own mind had not before reached. If the solitude of the cave must be encountered, he was ready for that. If the most servile compliances seemed likely to subserve his ultimate interest, he was ready to make them. If the arts of persuasion were required, those arts he was sure to use. If a resort to the sword seemed likely to extend his dominion, he seized it in an instant, and brought it to its bloody work. He professed indeed to be labouring for the world ;—for the world's reformation from idolatry and sin,—for the world's illumination in respect to the great truths of religion ; but it was as clear as the light that he was *really* labouring for the world's subjection to his usurped authority ;—labouring not only to extend the glory of his own name over the earth, but to perpetuate it to the end of time. Every thing showed that if his own personal wishes could be gratified, and his own personal reign extended, he cared little for any thing else ; that, not the reformation of the world, but the glory of the pretended reformer, was the object which occupied the whole field of his vision.



And now was there ever any thing so entirely the opposite of all this as the conduct of Jesus? To what single incident can you point in the history of his life, that indicated a thirst for earthly glory; or rather that did *not* indicate that he regarded the honours of the world as worthless, and that he completely lost sight of himself in his benevolent regard to the interests of others? He has indeed a mighty plan to execute; and that plan bears heavily upon his heart night and day; and it must be acknowledged that it contemplates his own ultimate exaltation to a universal dominion; but it is a most gracious and blessed dominion;—a dominion which will constitute the highest happiness and glory of the universe. Upon all the objects of worldly ambition—riches, honours, pleasures—he steadily turned his back; and voluntarily yielded to every privation, to every sacrifice, and ultimately to death itself, when he showed continually that in the apparent weakness of his arm there dwelt a power which neither animate nor inanimate nature could resist. If he had been ambitious of temporal greatness, though he might for a while have submitted to privations and sufferings for the sake of the glory which they might ultimately secure to him, yet would he have taken a course which he distinctly foresaw and foretold would terminate in the ignominious horrors of crucifixion? If it be said that he coveted posthumous fame, I answer that, unless he had been conscious that he was the Son of God, he could have expected no other fame than that of an enthusiast or an impostor; and the supposition that he was influenced by worldly motives precludes the supposition of his actual Messiahship. There were occasions in his life, you remember, when he might have availed himself of his temporary popularity with the multitude for heading a

powerful combination against either the church or the state; and in one instance we are informed that they would gladly have made him a king; but every such movement he instantly discountenanced, and always kept himself in obscurity so far as was consistent with the benevolent purposes of his mission. He was alike superiour to the influence of applause and of censure; was never intoxicated by success or mortified by defeat. When the shouts of 'Hosanna' from the crowd rung in his ears, he betrayed nothing of a self-complacent exultation: when he was stunned by the execrations of the mob, his accustomed equanimity never forsook him.—The truth was that he had no private or selfish ends to gain: the great objects upon which his eye was fixed were the salvation of the world and the glory of God; and whatever occurred to him, whether of good or evil, he regarded simply in its bearing upon these objects. He was rich, but for our sakes became poor. He was enthroned in glory, but for our sakes condescended to begin life in a manger and end it on a cross. While he was in the world,—that very world too of which he was the proprietor,—he submitted to almost every species of indignity and sorrow, and had not even where to lay his head. Can you imagine any thing more remote than this from the workings of worldly ambition? If Jesus was ambitious of temporal distinction, conceive, if you can, of a character that is not so.

3. Mohamed *was crafty*: Jesus *was perfectly honest*.

You may look at any of the leading actions of Mohamed's life, and you can scarcely fail to detect in them the wily spirit of an impostor. He knew that the enterprise which he contemplated was one of mighty magnitude; and as such, required much deep and laborious

thought in the preparation for its accomplishment: he knew too that the character he was about to assume was a sacred character, and that the world would have a right to expect that one who professed to be God's last and greatest Prophet should, for a season at least, have been separated from the world for purposes of devout contemplation. Both these ends he contrived to accomplish by his long and solitary residence in the cave of Mount Hara; for while this gave him the opportunity of carefully maturing his plans of subsequent action, it enabled him, when he came to carry those plans into effect, to point with some show of probability to the time and the place of his professedly receiving divine communications; and thus, the more easily, and the more strongly, to impress the world with his superiour sanctity. He knew that the dispensations of Moses and Jesus had been authenticated by miracles, and that it would be natural for the world to look for similar evidences of a commission from Heaven in one who should succeed them with still higher pretensions; but as he knew that he was here utterly lame, instead of attempting to feign the performance of miracles, which is always the most dangerous step an impostor can take, he artfully gave out that the Koran, on account of its incomparable sublimity, was a standing miracle, and superseded the necessity of any others. As the materials for the Koran were evidently collected from various sources, and contained much of self-contradiction, which he knew would not be likely to escape observation, and which perchance might be brought to discredit his system, he provided against such a consequence by pretending to a succession of revelations during the long period of twenty-three years; maintaining that God was pleased, from time to time, to enlarge, to amend, and even to revoke, previous

communications: and to this day, when the followers of Mohamed are pressed with the inconsistencies of the Koran, they have still the same answer which he himself furnished them, and which takes off the responsibility from the Prophet and casts it upon God. As the population of Arabia was of a mixed character, he foresaw that his system, in order to succeed, must combine, to some extent, the peculiarities of the different parties which he wished to conciliate; and hence, while he laid the foundation of his system in the great doctrine of the unity of God, in which all professed to unite, he flattered the idolater, the Jew, the professor of Christianity, by a recognition of something which belonged to their respective systems. In prosecuting his pretended mission, he professed, while he felt himself weak and inadequate to any daring movement, to have neither a disposition nor a warrant for using any other force than that of truth and argument; but as soon as he felt strong enough for the enterprise, he stood forth with a sword in his hand at the head of an army. And as he moved forward in his victorious career, every thing that he did was done from considerations of the deepest policy. If those who were conquered by his arms became the objects of his mercy, it was because he imagined that, by an exhibition of kindness, he could disarm them of their hostility, or allure others to his cause: or if he consigned them to an instant and cruel death, it was because he saw in them an obstinacy which would never yield, and which might still kindle into a desperate resistance, or because he wished to render future conquests more easy by striking terror into those who were to be the subjects of them. In every thing he showed himself the very apostle of cunning: every plan that he formed, every step that he took, was marked by that spirit of artifice



which constituted one of the leading elements of his character.

Jesus was indeed consummately prudent: it is said by one of his biographers, that he did not commit himself to man, because he knew what was in man. Nevertheless, he was as far removed as possible from any thing that had even the appearance of dissimulation.—While he constantly inculcated the importance of perfect sincerity, he exhibited a complete pattern of this virtue in his life. He has no plans which he is ashamed or unwilling to acknowledge: he is influenced by no motives which he is not conscious will bear to be scrutinized: he performs no actions which, if they were blazoned before the world, would require an apology. He has manifestly one great object to accomplish; and to that object he is directing all his efforts in the full light of day. In his intercourse with mankind he never says one thing and means another; and though he sometimes confounds his enemies by his unearthly wisdom, and suffers them to entangle themselves in their efforts to entangle him, yet he never spreads a snare even for *their* feet: he leaves them to become the authors of their own confusion. He does nothing in darkness: light is the element of all his purposes and all his actions.

4. Mohamed *yielded himself without restraint to sensual indulgences*: Jesus *was immaculately pure*.

In the early part of his life, it would seem that Mohamed, from considerations of policy, did impose some restraint upon the sensual appetites; for he saw clearly that the world would require this in one who should set up to be its reformer. With all the power of his genius and all the depth of his art, he was well aware that he could not accomplish his object, if his life were openly and flagrantly at war with the first principles of morali-



ty ; and he seems so far to have yielded to the necessity of the case, as to have been kept within the bounds of sobriety and decency. But before you make up your mind in respect to this part of his character, wait till his cause has gathered so much strength that he has cast off all fear of opposition ; till his character has become so sacred in the view of his delirious followers, that they regard it not only as incapable of being marred, but as consecrating every quality that may belong to it. And now that the considerations which have hitherto kept his unhallowed propensities in check are removed, you shall see him sinking the man in the brute and even wallowing in the mire of voluptuousness. It were impossible, without transgressing the bounds of decency, to do justice to this part of his character : I shall dismiss it therefore with the single remark that he justified his sensuality by the principles of his system ; and that, while he gave to his followers a license in respect to their appetites which was utterly inconsistent with sound morality, he claimed still greater liberty for himself from the very consideration which ought to have led him to the most rigid self-denial ;—viz, that he was a Prophet of the Most High God. As the heaven to which he taught his followers to aspire was a place of unbounded sensuality, so he, as their great leader, exemplified the character of the sensualist to a degree, which has given his name a pre-eminence in the annals of pollution, and which must ever cause virtue to blush and weep.

I cannot bring myself to contrast the adorable Redeemer of the world with this vile impostor, on this point, other than by saying that Jesus was immaculately holy. The appetites common to human nature entered into his constitution ; but they occupied precisely the place which the Creator designed for them, and were always

subservient to the divine glory. And while Jesus was a model both of outward and inward purity, the doctrines which he inculcated, the duties which he enjoined, were all stamped with the same character. He not only prohibited open acts of wickedness, but the thoughts, the affections, the whole inner man, he would bring under a purifying influence. The Heaven to which he constantly pointed his followers was a holy Heaven; and the evidence of their title to it he made to consist entirely in their moral purity. To honour the law of God was his errand into the world; and not an action of his life, nor a word from his lips, nor a feeling of his heart, ever fell below that perfect standard.

5. *Mohamed was cruel : Jesus was tender and merciful.*

I am aware that some have maintained that Mohamed was constitutionally humane and generous; and that the cruelty in which he indulged was the result of mere policy. Be it so; and who will recognise in this the semblance of an apology for him? Is it a more heinous crime for a man to bathe his hands in the blood of his fellow man in obedience to a strong inherent propensity, than to perform the same barbarous act merely from the deliberate calculations of self-interest? On the contrary, is not the turpitude of such an act rather aggravated than lessened in the latter case by the consideration that the mind acts with greater freedom;—that it goes coolly to work to set aside the first laws of nature, when not only the voice of conscience, but the voice of an instinctive tenderness, is lifted up, to protest against the deed. But let the conduct of Mohamed in this respect be accounted for as it may, that it was barbarous in the extreme no one who has any knowledge of his history can question. From the hour that he proclaimed

his pretended commission to resort to the sword, desolation every where followed in his track. Those who would not tamely yield up the very first right which God had given them—the right of thinking for themselves,—and who dared to question, much more to resist, his authority, were most unceremoniously slaughtered in obedience to his mandate. No domestick tie,—not even the endearments of filial, or conjugal, or parental, tenderness, were so sacred, as to be respected by him for a moment. His eye was never weary of beholding blood; his ear was never weary of the groans of death; his heart was never weary of its cold and desperate purposes; and till his eye was closed, and his ear was deaf, and his heart was still, in death, he held his bloody sceptre with an iron grasp; and as he had become the terror of the surrounding nations, seemed likely to become the terror of the world.

But nothing like this do you find in the character of Jesus. His heart was the seat of boundless compassion. The errand on which he came was the most gracious of all errands;—nothing less than to seek and save that which is lost; to heal the wounds which sin and sorrow make in the heart, by pointing to a fountain of mercy open,—to a world of glory in prospect. And now I ask you to read over the history of the life of Jesus, and tell me whether his conduct as it is there exhibited, his spirit as it is there described, were not entirely in keeping with the benevolent object which brought him into the world. Where will you find an instance in which he manifested the least disregard to the rights of others; or in which he turned a deaf ear to the voice of human distress; or in which he even seemed to render evil for evil? Where can you point to any thing in his instructions that looks like conniving at injustice, or oppression,

or cruelty ; or that, by being practically received, would not make the heart of man more tender and generous ? Follow him from place to place, and observe the purposes for which his mighty power is displayed ;—not to elevate himself to an arbitrary dominion over his fellow-men ; not to accumulate for himself the riches or the honours of the world ; no, not even to bring to himself the common comforts of life ; but to dry away the fountains of sorrow, and open in their place fountains of consolation. And while his career was one of boundless and uninterrupted benevolence, he was met, for the most part, with chilling disdain or malignant insult. And yet not a resentful word ever escaped his lips ; not an unkind emotion ever arose in his heart. I cannot dwell on this delightful trait in his character ; and yet I *must* ask you to pause a moment at his cross, and see how marvellously it comes out in his dying scene ;—how the spirit of divine charity finds vent amidst agonies which cast into the shade all else that human nature ever suffered. The thief at his side had just been mocking him ; but he became a penitent, and Jesus with his dying breath pronounced him forgiven. The infuriated mob who surrounded his cross, and saw with fiendlike joy the blood streaming from his body, instead of being the objects of his vengeance, were the objects of his compassion ; and, as if he would fain find some apology even for *them*, he connected with his dying prayer for their forgiveness, this most charitable expression,—‘They know not what they do.’ So long as his tongue could move, it moved in obedience to the law of kindness ; so long as his heart continued to beat, it beat throbs of compassion for his enemies and murderers.—Others have exhibited a high degree of tenderness and magnanimity ; but who that contemplates Jesus upon



the cross will not acknowledge that he infinitely exceeds them all ?

I have held up before you the character of Mohamed and the character of Jesus ; and now I ask you whether the former is not in every respect worthy of an impostor ; the latter in every respect worthy of the Son of God ? If we knew nothing of the system of Mohamed apart from his general character, could we hesitate for a moment to decide that it could not be of heavenly origin ? If we knew nothing of the religion of Jesus apart from the life which he lived and the death which he died, should we not unhesitatingly conclude that it had received the stamp of divine authority ?

It only remains to contrast these systems,

#### IV. In their INFLUENCE ON THE WORLD.

And here I must concede, at the outset, that the contrast on this point loses, in no small degree, its force, from the consideration that Christianity has suffered so much in the hands of her professed friends. Her history, for many ages, instead of being the record of the pure and simple religion which Jesus established, exhibits little else than a succession of the most abominable corruptions which had come in under her hallowed name : And where the great principles of Christianity were lost sight of, it were not to be expected that the mere name would carry with it any wonderful power. Hence, if we will form a proper estimate of the actual effects she has produced, we must look chiefly at the earlier and the later periods of her history ; must view her as she was before she was fettered by the spirit of the world, and as she has been, since she was disenthralled by the spirit of the reformation. And I venture to say that, just in proportion as her legitimate influences have been felt, she



has contributed to improve the character, and elevate the condition, of man.

1. Mohamedism *has always been the foe, Christianity the friend, of intellectual improvement.*

The country in which Mohamed first planted his standard, as it was at that time, has been ever since, overrun, to a great extent, with barbarism. As he took advantage of the intellectual degradation of the Arabians for the introduction of his system, so the system which he imposed upon them was adapted to render that degradation perpetual. And as it has been in Arabia, so it has been in every other country where the authority of Mohamed has been recognised: a darkness that can be felt has settled over the people; learning has not only been neglected, but actually despised; the arts and sciences have been alike frowned upon by publick opinion; and a deep pause has ensued in every thing connected with the progress of civilization. So long has this night of barbarism lasted, that the inhabitants of those countries choose darkness rather than light; and the least beam of intellectual sunshine becomes painful to their diseased vision.

But wherever genuine Christianity has had an opportunity of exerting her influence, she has always been found an efficient auxiliary in the cause of intellectual improvement. Not to insist upon the fact that many who have rendered the greatest service to the interests of learning have been most deeply imbued with Christianity as a vital and practical principle,—who that knows any thing of the past need be told that the era of the Reformation was also the era of the revival of letters; that then Christianity and learning which had been imprisoned together for ages, came forth hand in hand, to scatter their united blessings over the world? Where do

we find the greatest improvements in the various departments of science and literature at the present day, but in those countries where the gospel is known and its institutions are established? And if we limit our view to our own country, where do we find learning in the highest repute, and its institutions sustained with the most exemplary care? Is it in those regions where even the forms of Christianity are scarcely recognised; or is it not rather where the Bible is to be found in every dwelling, and a church in every neighbourhood, and where the ordinances of the gospel have been long established and reverently regarded? I know indeed that the general remark which I have here made has its exceptions, and that Pagan Greece and Rome rose to a high pitch of intellectual refinement; and I know too that many in Christian countries who appear to have drank deeply into the spirit of the gospel, are unreasonably and culpably inattentive to the cultivation of their minds: nevertheless, I appeal confidently to the history of the world for evidence that true Christianity has always been pre-eminently the friend of sound learning; and that, in comparison with any other religion, and especially Mohamedism, her influence in this respect has been most benign and extensive.

It would be easy to account for this difference of which I have here spoken by a reference to the elements of the two systems. Mohamedism, from its very constitution, is fitted to cramp the intellectual faculties, and contract the field of intellectual vision. The great object which it proposes—the attainment of a sensual paradise,—is little adapted to kindle the fires of genius, or put the mind to the cultivation of its own powers. The evil passions which it cherishes, the vices which it permits and justifies, have a tendency to cloud the understanding and

impair its vigor. It recognises all the treasures of human knowledge as concentrated in the Koran, and condemns every thing which is not found there as spurious and vile; when the character of the Koran is actually such that he who should have learned every thing which it contains,—though he would have learned something that was true and valuable,—would yet have gathered fables and absurdities enough to neutralize it. But Christianity, on the contrary, powerfully impels to intellectual action. First of all, she enlightens man in respect to his destiny; and brings to his view a reward which is worthy of his intellectual nature. She presses him with his responsibility both to God and man for the cultivation of his powers; she leads him into a field of glorious discoveries, and brings him in contact with truths which the mind cannot steadily contemplate without having its faculties invigorated; and finally she opens a passage into the understanding through the affections by refining and elevating them, so as to render them a proper medium for the communication of intellectual light. And thus it appears not only that genuine Christianity has always been the friend, and Mohamedism always the foe, of mental improvement, but from the nature of the case it always *must* be so, while each retains its appropriate constitution.

2. Mohamedism *has exerted a withering influence; Christianity, a fostering influence, on the moral virtues.*

The spirit which characterized Mohamed he succeeded so admirably in incorporating into his system, that his followers in every age have been most strikingly imbued with his own prominent peculiarities. Particularly, the inveterate enmity which he manifested towards all who refused to acknowledge his authority, has been

propagated through all the generations of his disciples ; and at this day it is enough for a Mohamedan to know that the man whom he meets does not acknowledge the authority of the Prophet, to justify it to his conscience in refusing to him the common offices of humanity, or, as the case may be, in bathing his hands in his blood. Every nation which has embraced the Mohamedan faith regards all other nations with an implacable hatred ; and if they are restrained from openly oppressive and violent acts, it is only from a consciousness of their inability to triumph in the conflict which such a course would involve. And with this unsocial and hostile spirit as it respects other nations, has been uniformly connected the almost unrestrained indulgence of the baser passions ;—vices in the practice of which man seems to forget his alliance to any other species than the brutes. Truth and justice, purity and charity,—though, as words, they may have a place in the vocabulary of the Mussulman, yet, as living qualities, constitute no part of his character.

I surely need not undertake to prove to you that whatsoever things are pure, lovely, honest and of good report, are among the legitimate fruits of Christianity. And wherever this religion has prevailed in any tolerable degree of purity, these fruits have been delightfully manifest. It has constituted, and every thing indicates that it is destined in a still higher degree to constitute, a sort of common bond of union among the nations by whom it is professed ; and while it has inspired them with more liberal sentiments, bringing them to regard each other as belonging to one universal family, it has served greatly to increase their mutual intercourse, and thus render them instrumental of promoting the common prosperity. Let true Christianity become universal, and



if any thing is to be known by the past and the present, national jealousies and discords will be entirely banished, and the earth will bloom into one bright field of publick and private virtue.

Here again, you need only glance at the two systems to perceive the tendencies to virtue in the one, the tendencies to vice in the other. Some of the first principles of Mohamedism are utterly subversive of the social and moral virtues; and no man can practically adopt them, but that his heart must become as dark as midnight, and as cold as winter. But every thing belonging to Christianity is adapted to form the soul to the love and practice of virtue. She requires virtue in the highest perfection; she proffers to it the noblest reward; she furnishes all needed motives and helps to the attainment of it; and whoever yields to her influence, must, from the necessity of the case, possess a truly virtuous character.

3. *Mohamedism has always been identified with a despotick government: Christianity has connected herself indiscriminately with every form of government.*

In its very nature Mohamedism is a system of tyranny. It proposes nothing less than to take a despotick cognizance of the whole man—body and spirit; and every nation that receives the Koran, thereby tamely surrenders its rights, and consents to be ruled with a rod of iron. Hence we find that, wherever this religion has prevailed, freedom, if it have before existed, has become extinct; and nations have worn with the most abject submission the chains that have been forged for them. No matter in what part of the world their lot may have been cast, or to what diversity of physical influences they may have been subjected; no matter what may have been their previous character, or their previous his-



tory ; from the hour they have embraced the Mohamedan faith, their condition in this respect has been the same,—that of entire subjection to an absolute despot ; and if ages have since rolled over them, they have been ages of deep and ignoble servitude. The successors of Mohamed, though they do not claim his prophetic character, do claim his regal authority ; and in the exercise of that authority, are as stern, and oppressive, and unrelenting, as was the original founder of the system.

But the Christian religion, instead of being the exclusive ally of despotism, much less being in its constitution essentially despotick, has linked itself with all the various forms of government which exist upon the earth. In the few instances in which it has been associated with a despotick government, it has served, at least to some extent, to limit its usurpations and mitigate its severity ; and in proportion to the degree of purity in which it exists, just and liberal views of the science of government are found to prevail. It is the progress of publick opinion enlightened and guided by Christianity which is gradually working a change in the different governments on the continent of Europe ; and one great reason why that change is not more rapid is, that Christianity in those countries works at great disadvantage, from being still burdened for the most part with a mass of corruptions. The more free and popular governments of Great Britain and of our own country are monuments of the liberalizing influence of our religion ;—pledges that the universal prevalence of Christianity will be the harbinger of the universal triumph of freedom.

After what has been said, I hardly need add,

4. That Mohamedism *has maintained a steady war against human happiness : Christianity has scattered innumerable blessings over the path of life.*

For how can it be imagined otherwise, when we take into view the opposite influences which the two systems exert upon the character and condition of man? Is not intelligence an ingredient in human happiness? Is not a deep and debasing ignorance to be deprecated as an evil? Christianity refines and exalts the intellect, and causes it to become fruitful in great and burning thoughts, and guides it through fields of truth and glory which it is a luxury to traverse; while Mohamedism keeps the soul always in chains, and represses its native longings for knowledge, and shuts it up to the view of objects which have a tendency to bring over it the rust of inaction. Are not the social virtues adapted to make man happy? And is not misery legitimately generated by selfishness and licentiousness, by all the baser and all the fiercer passions? Christianity inculcates universal purity and good will; and so far as her influence is permitted to operate, she forms man to a benevolent temper, and makes him studious of promoting the happiness of his fellow man; while Mohamedism inspires him with malignant distrust and savage cruelty, and even arms him with weapons to shed his brother's blood. Is not Freedom the sister of Charity, the mother of social happiness? Are not degradation and debasement the legitimate offspring of Servitude? But Christianity breaks the rod of the tyrant and lets the oppressed go free; while Mohamedism rules not only with an iron but a bloody sceptre, and spurns at the very name of Liberty as if it were a curse to the world. Now I ask again, does not the one system combine in a high degree the elements of human happiness; the other in an equal degree the elements of human woe? Can you conceive of a nation that is intelligent, virtuous and free, that is not happy? Can you conceive of a nation sunk in ig-

norance, debased by crime, enslaved by despotism, in whose lot there is any thing that deserves the name of happiness?

I know of no fact on record which illustrates more strikingly the opposite influences of the two systems on human happiness, especially on the social and kindly affections, than that recorded by the venerable Doctor Buchanan concerning Abdallah and Sabat, which occurred in the early part of the present century.—These two individuals, both belonging to distinguished families in Arabia, were intimate friends, and set out to travel together in foreign countries. Having passed through Persia and reached the city of Cabul, Abdallah, in consequence of being appointed to an important office in the government, remained there, while Sabat continued his travels through Tartary. The former, before he had resided long at Cabul, met with the New Testament; and, in consequence of reading it, became a convert to the Christian faith. As he knew that his conversion, if it were known, would be treated as a capital offence, he withdrew privately from the place of his residence, and set out to travel, in the hope of finding a place where he might, without jeopardizing his life, enjoy his religion. While he was walking in the streets of Bochara, a city of Tartary, he was surprised by meeting his former fellow traveller; but Sabat, who had, in the mean time, heard of his apostacy from Mohamedism, showed him at once that he was no longer his friend. Abdallah fell at his feet, and with tears conjured him by their former friendship to save his life; but Sabat's heart was as unrelenting as the grave. He hastened to the authorities of the city, and took measures to have him delivered up to the king; and forthwith the decree was issued for his execution; and a herald went

through the city publickly proclaiming it. When the fatal hour arrived, Abdallah was led forth in the presence of an immense multitude to receive the crown of martyrdom. Sabat also mingled in the crowd, and stood within sight of his friend who was about to die. When all things were arranged for the bloody transaction, Abdallah was offered his life if he would recant; but he unhesitatingly refused to comply with the condition. The executioner who stood before him with his sword, then began his work, by cutting off one of his hands; upon which he was again offered his life upon the same condition, while a surgeon stood ready to heal the wound; but he held his purpose with unshaken firmness. And he bowed his head to receive the fatal blow with a meekness and dignity which would not have dishonoured the first martyr to Christianity. Sabat afterwards said that Abdallah looked at him in the crowd, but it was a look not of anger but of pity;—a look which evinced the same spirit which Jesus manifested when he said, in reference to *his* murderers, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!”

Sabat seems to have been impressed with the conviction that Abdallah would certainly renounce Christianity rather than yield up his life; but when he saw that his friend had actually been murdered through *his* instrumentality, he became wretched: that forgiving look which Abdallah, in the moment of his martyrdom, had fastened upon him, haunted him wherever he went; and he pursued his journey in the hope of finding rest to his troubled spirit. At length he reached India; and while he was employed there in some publick capacity, he too was induced to read the New Testament and compare it with the Koran; the result of which was that he professedly renounced Mohamedism, publickly



professed his faith in Christianity, and for several years was an active and useful co-adjutor with the British missionaries in India in the great objects to which they were devoted. When his friends in Arabia heard of his conversion, they immediately despatched his brother to India with a view to assassinate him. The brother entered his dwelling in the disguise of a beggar, with an instrument of death concealed in his bosom; and had actually drawn it forth, and was in the act of attempting the fatal deed, when Sabat seized the assassin's arm, and his servants instantly came to his deliverance. It was through Sabat's intercession in his brother's behalf that *his* life was not sacrificed at the altar of public justice: he evinced toward him a forgiving and fraternal spirit, and sent him away in peace with letters and valuable presents to his mother's family.

It had been well if this interesting transaction had occupied the last chapter in Sabat's eventful history; for what remains to be told only disappoints the hopes which his previous course had awakened. At the time when Doctor Buchanan stated the preceding facts in his celebrated sermon entitled "The Star in the East," he regarded Sabat as evincing in an unusual degree the Christian spirit, and as probably destined to do more for the conversion of his countrymen than any other man. But shortly after this, to the astonishment of all who had been conversant with him, he suddenly took the fancy that his great powers and acquirements were not adequately estimated, and in a fit of resentment openly renounced Christianity, again avowed his belief in Mohamedism, and went into Persia where he wrote a work to refute the system which he had, for several years, so successfully laboured to vindicate and extend. After that, he professed, for a short time, to return to Chris-



tianity, and wrote to one of the missionaries that, from the time of his apostacy, he had not been able to find rest for the sole of his foot; but, at a still later period, and so far as is known, up to the time of his death, he ranked himself among the followers of Mohamed.—About 1811 he travelled in Pegu, where he was concerned in some treasonable attempts against the reigning prince; and being detected, he and his fellow conspirator were put together in a sack and thrown into the sea. Thus ended the career of a man who, for several years, was the constant companion of some of the best of men, and their co-adjutor in the best of causes.

I ask you now, my friends, to observe how the spirit of Mohamedism and the spirit of Christianity each comes out in these affecting incidents; how much of meekness, and tenderness, and benignity, appertains to the one, how much of distrust, and revenge, and cruelty, appertains to the other. Observe the meeting in the streets of Cabul; and see Abdallah the Christian upon his knees importunately begging for his life, and Sabat the Mohamedan disregarding the entreaties of his friend, and eagerly adopting measures which are to result in his death. Observe what takes place at the scene of execution: Abdallah casts upon Sabat a forgiving look; and lifts his eyes to Heaven as if in supplication for the forgiveness of his murderers; but the kindness of his spirit does nothing to arrest the murderous procedure.—And then compare Sabat's conduct—I cannot say while he was a *true* Christian,—for *that* he evidently never was,—but while he was a *professor* of Christianity, and *seemed* to be imbued with its spirit, with his conduct while he avowed himself a disciple of Mohamed; and see how, under the influence of the one system, he could deliver up his friend to death,—how, even under the par-

tial influence of the other, he could forgive the brother who had come from afar to stab him to the heart. Who can contemplate this affecting story without being deeply impressed with the conviction that Christianity is a religion of love ; that Mohamedism finds its element amidst scenes of treachery and blood ?

In contrasting Christianity with Deism, as I have done in the preceding discourse, I had in view the double object of guarding you against the snares of infidelity, and building you up in the most holy faith. But I shall have gained my purpose in *this* discourse, if the effect of it shall be to enlarge and exalt your views of Christianity ; for none of you, I am sure, need to be cautioned against resting in the wild delusions and absurd vagaries of Mohamedism. You have seen that, while both systems claim to be of divine original, the one bears the most unequivocal evidences of authenticity, the other is indelibly stamped with the seal of imposture. As the brightness of noonday seems more intense when contrasted with the darkness of midnight, as the verdure of spring seems more enchanting when contrasted with the dreariness of winter, as virtue herself gathers fresh attractions when contrasted with the deformity of vice, so the truth and grace and loveliness of Christianity never appear to greater advantage, than when viewed in contrast with the forbidding and malignant features of Mohamedism. When you view the impostor burning with ambition and wading in blood, how incomparably lovely appears the disinterestedness, the condescension, of the Redeemer in giving his own blood for the salvation of men ! When you contemplate the one forcing his religion upon the world at the point of the sword, what say you of the other, who carries every thing by the power of truth and the power of the Spirit ? When you

see the religion which was established by the one operating as a blight upon useful knowledge and moral virtue, systematically cherishing the worst passions of human nature, and checking the native aspirings of the soul for freedom, are you not more than ever enraptured by the religion which was established by the other, as you see it moving like an angel of mercy through the world? Truly Christianity is the daughter of the skies. Her native element is light and love. Her errand upon the earth is to enlighten, and bless and save; and when that errand shall be fully accomplished, she will return to dwell in her native Heavens.

But while we eulogize Christianity, my friends, let us take heed that we do not live strangers to her regenerating power. While we profess to be grateful that we are surrounded by the splendours of the Sun of Righteousness, let it not be told to our confusion at last, that we have, in the most important sense, chosen darkness rather than light. If the only advantage we derive from the gospel is the melioration of our external condition, be assured the day will come when this very gospel will be to us a fierce minister of condemnation; when we shall look back upon our Christian privileges in the agony of remorse, and envy the lot of those who have perished in Mohamedan darkness. Look away to those nations sitting in the region and shadow of death, and let them have your sympathy and charity and prayers; but forget not to look inward upon your own hearts, and see if the word of truth have had its legitimate influence in making you wise and holy unto salvation.

## LECTURE V.

### PROTESTANT CHRISTIANITY CONTRASTED WITH ROMANISM.

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#### II. THESSALONIANS II. 3.

*For that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first.*

IN CONNEXION WITH

#### GALATIANS V. 1.

*Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.*

As the great Creator, when he had completed his handy work, looked forth upon it, and pronounced all very good, so our Lord Jesus Christ and his Apostles, when they had finished *their* work in the introduction of Christianity, beheld in the result of their efforts a system of matchless beauty and mighty power. The doctrines of the gospel were then received in their native purity; the institutions of the gospel were established in their native simplicity; the spirit of the gospel was acted out in its native loveliness; and so far as the influence of the gospel was felt, the moral waste brightened into a

field of moral beauty. That was indeed the morning of the new dispensation ; but it was a morning without clouds. That was the infancy of Christianity ; but the principle of immortal life which animated her discovered itself in bold and vigorous pulsations ; insomuch that, after the lapse of more than eighteen centuries, we are constrained to acknowledge that the days of her infancy were the days of her greatness and power.

But scarcely had the Apostles to whose immediate care Christ had committed the concerns of his kingdom, followed their Master to Heaven, before a disposition began to manifest itself in the church, to alter and amend this last and noblest product of infinite wisdom. The first departure from the primitive simplicity of the gospel was so slight as hardly to be recognised as an invasion of Christ's authority, even by those who were most jealous for his honour ; but you need not be told that it proved the beginning of an apostacy which has caused ages of weeping to the faithful, and from which the church has only yet begun to recover. When the first step in the career of defection had been taken, the next was taken with the greater ease ; and gradually a mighty system of corruption grew up in which the doctrines and institutions of the gospel were distorted into an unnatural and unlovely shape, and which retained scarcely any thing of Christianity but the venerable name.— Within a few centuries after the apostolick age, the Christian church, which, in her beginning, was humble, and spiritual and unpretending, had become worldly, and proud and ambitious. She had invented new doctrines, and decreed new rites, in opposition to the authority of her Head. She had witnessed the death of her spiritual prosperity, from the blighting influence of error and strife and superstition ; and seemed to hail it as a



blessing, rather than mourn over it as a bereavement. She had surrounded herself with the insignia of temporal dominion and the splendours of worldly greatness; and finally she became the seat of a spiritual despotism, and maintained her authority by the most desperate outrages upon the authority of Jesus Christ; and turned her hand with perfect coolness to the pious work of letting out the blood of every heart which happened not to beat in unison with her dictates. Each successive age rolled a still deeper darkness upon the world; and though there were always some witnesses for the truth, yet they were obliged to bury themselves in the deepest retirement, and even there, were liable to be found out by the searching hand of inquisitorial cruelty, and made to atone for the purity of their faith by the sacrifice of their blood.

But at length this yoke of ecclesiastical tyranny which had been worn for ages, as if men had supposed themselves made for no other purpose, became so oppressive that a long stifled sensibility began to recover itself, and here and there Reason uttered forth her dictates, and so much of the spirit of resistance presently appeared as to indicate the existence of a mighty hidden fire. In the latter half of the fourteenth century, John Wickliffe arose in England, and a few years later, John Huss and Jerome of Prague, on the continent, who ventured to attack the jurisdiction of the Pope and the corruptions of the clergy with some degree of boldness; and while the blood of Huss and Jerome which had stained the altar of martyrdom was still crying to Heaven for vengeance, the great Luther arose, and with invincible firmness put his hand to the work which his illustrious predecessors had commenced. When he began his career, he dreamed not where it would terminate; for there were only some gleams of light let in upon his mind,

and at best he saw men but as trees walking; but, as he advanced, the light became clearer and stronger; and he saw that the system to which he had been educated had rottenness at the core; and he determined with the heroism of a martyr to prosecute the work of reformation, as God should give him light to discover where it was needed, and strength to resist the power that should oppose him. And while this bold and lofty purpose was maturing in the mind of Luther, the great Head of the Church was forming other instruments to be employed for the same end: Calvin and Melancthon, Zuingle, and Farel, and Viret, and Knox, had been in a course of training by divine Providence to become Luther's co-adjutors; and such they actually became; and their united influence was as the lightning which reacheth from one end of heaven even to the other.— This new and surprising movement was met, as might have been expected, with the most desperate resistance: not only the ecclesiastics, but the kings and nobles of the earth, set themselves in array against it, professing to regard it as a rebellion against the authority of Heaven; but the cause moved forward in spite of all their efforts, and multitudes avowed themselves its friends at the hazard of a martyr's death. Within a few years from the time that Luther first publicly attacked the doctrine of indulgences, the standard of the Reformation was planted not only in Germany, but in France, Switzerland, Denmark, Sweden and Britain; and this glorious cause has been gradually going forward, not indeed without much to oppose and retard its progress, to the present hour. In nearly all the countries of Europe the Reformed church has an existence; but in several of them, as you are well aware, it occupies but a subordinate place, and is subject to extreme embarrassments.

And as the Reformation has been gradual in its progress among the nations, so it were not to be expected that it should at once have become complete in its character : and hence we find that the Reformers, great and good men as they were, differed on some points with each other ; and the Reformed church at this day embraces a variety of denominations ; agreeing however, with few exceptions, in those great truths which the first Reformers considered fundamental. Without venturing to claim for any portion of Protestant Christendom absolute freedom from error, we maintain that the system of doctrine which is professed by most of the Reformed churches is, in all its general features, the same which the early Christians were taught from the lips of the Apostles ; and on every point upon which the Protestant church differs from the Roman Catholic church, we, of course, maintain that it does so by the authority of scripture.

The former of the two passages which I read to you at the beginning of this discourse, has been universally admitted by Protestant commentators to refer to the Romish hierarchy ; and it were easy to vindicate this interpretation from all the objections with which the Romanists have ever opposed it. The latter passage was designed as a caution to the Christians of Galatia not to yield to the influence of those judaizing teachers who insisted on the perpetual obligation of the Mosaic law ; but it fairly admits of being applied to all Christians in reference to any system of ecclesiastical tyranny ; and especially to Protestant Christians in reference to that system which Luther and Calvin and their coadjutors abjured at the Reformation. It is in this latter sense exclusively that I shall consider it on the present occasion.

My design in this discourse then is *to contrast Protestant Christianity with Romanism*: And I shall do this in respect to

I. THEIR AGREEMENT WITH SCRIPTURE :

II. THEIR CONFORMABLENESS TO REASON :

III. THEIR CLAIM TO ANTIQUITY :

IV. THEIR ADAPTATION TO HUMAN NATURE :

V. THEIR EFFECTS ON HUMAN SOCIETY.

But before proceeding to the consideration of this contrast, let me ask your attention to one or two remarks.

In the first place, let it be distinctly understood that I do not deny to the Roman Catholic church the honour of having embraced in her communion at different periods many illustrious men ;—illustrious alike for their talents, their eloquence and their virtues. Massillon, and Fenelon, and Paschal, were Roman Catholics ; and brighter names than these we do not often meet on the page of modern ecclesiastical history. And there have been others of a still later period, who, though of less distinguished name, have fairly commended themselves to the grateful regards of posterity. These men, we cannot suppose, could have ever fully received all the absurdities which we shall see, in the progress of this discourse, belong to the canons of the church with which they were in communion ; and I am well aware that there are distinguished ecclesiastics at this day who profess to receive their articles with a very different construction from that which all antiquity has given to them. Where cases of this kind exist, let them be acknowledged ; and let no man be taxed with holding inconsistencies which he honestly disavows.

In the next place, it cannot successfully be questioned that the Roman Catholic religion every where, in re-



spect to its practical operation, has been in a degree softened and modified by the prevailing spirit of improvement, and especially through the influence of the Reformation. Compare the present condition of Italy and Spain, where Romanism has undergone less modification than any where else, with the condition of any Roman Catholic country previous to the Reformation, and you cannot resist the conviction that there is a mighty difference in favour of the former; that though there is deep darkness prevailing now, yet it is not the darkness of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. In this country especially the more revolting features of Romanism have hitherto scarcely been seen; and we may safely say that the system never *can* exist here, even in that degree of absurdity and intolerance by which it is characterized at this day in some other countries, unless it should succeed in effectually remodelling our institutions.

You will be convinced, I trust, from these remarks, that it is no part of my object in this discourse to attack the Romanists in the spirit of wholesale denunciation; but then I must be allowed to speak out my honest convictions without respect to any considerations of supposed delicacy. As a minister of Christ, I am bound to vindicate the truth against the encroachments of error; and not the less but the more, when error boldly plants itself in the midst of us; because I am set for the defence of the gospel:—but I am equally bound to perform this duty in the spirit of Christian kindness; for the servant of the Lord must be gentle and not strive, and must speak the truth in love. That I may not even seem to do injustice to the Romanists, I shall exhibit their system, not as it may be collected from the writings of their opposers, but as it is found in their own standards;—standards which have been adopted in a formal manner,



and which the church as a body continues to recognise without the least abatement from their authority. If it be said that there are individuals in the Roman Catholic communion by whom many of the doctrines contained in their formularies are not received, I have only to reply that so far they are not Roman Catholics; and perhaps, when they shall have advanced a little farther, they may be disposed to renounce the whole system. If I were called upon to state the views of religious doctrine which are held by the Presbyterian church, I should refer to her Confession of Faith: a similar demand in respect to the Episcopal church I should meet by a reference to her Thirty-Nine Articles: and if I were in controversy with either of these bodies, I should have a right to appeal to one or other of these public formularies as containing the sense of the denomination; and the fact that there were individuals professing to be Presbyterians or Episcopalians who rejected these standards would not at all abate from their authority, until the church by a publick act should have renounced them. On precisely the same ground I am about to appeal to the standards of the Roman Catholic church;—that they have not only never been authoritatively set aside, but that the church as a body still clings to them with undiminished pertinacity.

Let me now proceed to contrast Protestant Christianity with Romanism,

I. In respect to THEIR AGREEMENT WITH SCRIPTURE.

1. Romanism *denies*, Protestant Christianity *affirms*, *that the Holy Scriptures are a complete Rule of faith, independently of oral traditions.*

The decree of the council of Trent on this subject is in these words:—"All saving truth is not contained in the Holy Scripture, but partly in the scripture, and

partly in unwritten traditions; which, whosoever doth not receive with like piety and reverence as he doth the Scriptures, is accursed."

Hear the Apostle Paul, and see which side of the question has the sanction of *his* authority. In writing to Timothy, a young minister, who, it was exceedingly desirable should be led into all truth, on this subject, he declares that "the Holy Scriptures are able to make us wise unto salvation;" and again, that "all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." On these passages it may be remarked that, if the "Scriptures are able to make men wise unto salvation," there can be no occasion for unwritten traditions; and that, if the man of God can be so instructed out of the Scriptures as to be "perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works," they must contain every doctrine and precept which God in his wisdom has been pleased to reveal for the edification of the body of Christ or the conversion of the world. The Prophet Isaiah virtually excludes every thing else than the Holy Scriptures as a Rule of faith, when he says, "To the Law and to the Testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." The wise man in the Book of Proverbs says, "Every word of God is pure: Add thou not unto his word, lest he reprove thee and thou be found a liar."—And finally John in the Book of the Revelation declares, "I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this Book, if any man shall add unto them, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this Book."

But it may be asked whether there is not at least one passage in the New Testament, in which the observance of unwritten tradition is expressly enjoined:—I refer to the direction of Paul to the Thessalonians to “stand fast, and hold the traditions which they had been taught, whether by word or epistle.” The answer to this inquiry is that this direction had respect to the canon of scripture while it was yet incomplete; and at the time the epistle which contains it was written, upon a liberal allowance not more than one-third of the books which now compose the New Testament, were in existence.—Under these circumstances it requires no great stretch of credulity to suppose that the things which Paul had delivered, were subsequently, in the providence of God, committed to writing; and that the entire canon of scripture includes the very things which are referred to in this passage as oral traditions. But even if this were not insisted upon, we could never concede the claim of the Romanists in regard to this apostolick direction, until they had established the perfect identity of their traditions with the traditions of the Apostle;—a task which we may safely say it will require more learning and ingenuity than have ever yet been applied to it, to perform.

2. *Romanism prohibits the reading of the Scriptures by the common people: Protestant Christianity extends this privilege to all.*

In the fourth Rule of the Index of prohibited books it is thus decreed:—“Inasmuch as it is manifest from experience that, if the Holy Bible, translated into the vulgar tongue, be indiscriminately allowed to every one, the temerity of men will cause more evil than good to arise from it, it is on this point referred to the judgment of the bishops or inquisitors, who may, by the advice of the priest or confessor, *permit* the reading of the Bible,

translated into the vulgar tongue by Catholic authors, to those persons whose faith and piety they apprehend will be augmented, and not injured by it ; and this permission they must have in writing. But if any one shall have the presumption to read or possess it without such written permission, he shall not receive absolution until he have first delivered up such Bible to the ordinary. Booksellers who shall sell or otherwise dispose of Bibles in the vulgar tongue to any person not having such permission, shall forfeit the value of the books to be applied by the Bishop to some pious use, and shall be subjected to such other penalties as the Bishop shall judge proper. But regulars shall neither read nor purchase such Bibles, without a special license from their superiors." In perfect accordance with this decree, the late Pontiff Leo XII. in a Circular Letter, dated May 3d, 1824, and addressed to all Patriarchs, Primate, Arch-Bishops and Bishops, holds the following language: "We also, venerable brethren, conformably to our apostolical duty, exhort you diligently to occupy yourselves, by all means, to turn away your flock from these deadly pastures."—And what do you imagine these "deadly pastures" are?—Why nothing less than the Bible which we protestants use and circulate, and which this arrogant pontiff had just before termed "a gospel of the devil !"

Attend now to what the Scripture saith on this subject, and see whether it is most in accordance with the doctrine of the Romanists or of the Protestants. "Search the Scriptures" is the direct command of Jesus Christ;—a command which, from its very nature, as well as from the circumstances in which it was delivered, is equally binding upon all men. Paul, in writing to the Thessalonians, charges them that his "epistle be read to *all* the



holy brethren." In his epistles to the Romans, the Corinthians, the Galatians and the Ephesians, he distinctly recognises the fact that he is addressing, not the officers of the churches only, but "all that call on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ." James addresses his epistle "to the twelve tribes that are scattered abroad;" Peter his first epistle "to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bythinia;" and his second epistle "to *all* that have obtained like precious faith with us." Now I ask what stronger evidence the Apostle could have given that he designed these epistles to be read by all Christians indiscriminately, than is found in the fact that they were *addressed* to all? And how comes it to pass that the Bereans were commended by apostolick authority for the diligent searching of the Scriptures, if, after all, it is a sin to search them, unless by the special permission of an inquisitor?

3. Romanism *enjoins the worship of saints and images*: Protestant Christianity *maintains that God is the only proper object of religious worship*.

In the creed of Pope Pius IV. it is thus written:—"I also believe that the saints who reign with Christ, are to be worshipped and prayed to; and that their relicks are to be venerated." And again, "I most firmly assert that the images of Christ, and of the mother of God, who was always a virgin, are to be had and retained; and that due honour and worship is to be given to them." And the Council of Trent declares that "it is lawful to represent God and the Holy Trinity by images; and that the images and relicks of Christ and the saints, are to be duly honoured, venerated or worshipped; and that in this veneration or worship those are venerated which are represented by them."



And what saith the Scripture in respect to the object of worship? It saith "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him *only* shalt thou serve." It saith farther, "Thou shall not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in Heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them nor serve them." And God says by his servant to the people of Israel, "Take ye, therefore, heed unto yourselves, (for ye saw no manner of similitude on the day that the Lord spake unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire,) lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image, the similitude of any figure, the likeness of male or female." The whole tenor of Scripture on this subject is in full accordance with these passages: judge then whether the doctrine of the Romanists or of the Protestants is the doctrine of the Bible.

4. Romanism *prescribes the celebration of religious worship in a language which is unintelligible to the people*: Protestant Christianity *requires that divine service be performed in a language which the people can understand*.

The Council of Trent, professedly acting under the guidance of the Holy Ghost, has not only decreed that mass shall be celebrated, and many other acts of religious worship performed, in Latin, but has denounced an anathema upon those who presume to maintain a different opinion.

But let Paul be heard on this subject, that we may see into which scale the weight of *his* testimony falls. "He that speaketh in an unknown tongue," saith the Apostle, 'speaketh not unto men, but unto God; for no man understandeth him.'" And again, "If I come unto you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you, ex-

cept I shall speak to you either by revelation, or by knowledge, or by prophesyings, or by doctrine? For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful. Else when thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned, say Amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest? In the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue.”—This is the substance of all that the Scripture hath said on this subject; and who will venture to say that there is any thing in it that even seems to favour—nay that does not directly *oppose*, the doctrine of the Romanists?

5. Romanism *virtually denies the completeness of Christ's atonement, by daily renewing his sacrifice in the celebration of the mass*: Protestant Christianity *recognises the perfection of Christ's sacrifice*.

I am aware that there are some who call themselves Protestant Christians, who deny that the death of Christ had any thing of the nature of a propitiatory sacrifice; and attribute to it scarcely a higher kind of efficacy in the work of our redemption than to the death of Stephen or Paul. But the great mass of the Reformed churches have distinctly recognised the atoning efficacy of Christ's death as one of the most prominent features of the Christian system; and those who have maintained the opposite doctrine have generally been considered as holding an error which cuts them off from all reasonable claim to the Christian character. I repeat then, if the standards of the different branches of the Reformed church be appealed to, we unquestionably arrive at the conclusion that the doctrine of the atoning sacrifice of Christ, and of the perfection of that sacrifice, constitutes

an essential article of Christianity as it is held by the great mass of Protestants.

The doctrine which the Romish church holds on this subject is thus expressed in the creed of Pius IV.—“I believe that in the mass is offered to God a true, proper, and propitiatory sacrifice, for the quick,’ or living ‘and dead.” And the Council of Trent has decreed that, “if any one say that in the mass there is not a true and proper sacrifice offered unto God; or that to be offered is nothing else but for Christ to be given to us to eat, let him be anathema.”

I hardly need remind you that a large part of the Sacred Scriptures relates to the point now under consideration; and as there is entire harmony in all that they contain on the subject, it may suffice to quote two or three passages. “If any man sin,’ saith the Apostle John, ‘we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.” Paul, in writing to the Hebrews, says, “Christ being come, an High Priest of good things to come . . . . he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.” Again, “Once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.” And again, “By one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified.” Need I ask whether these scripture quotations can even be tortured into an accordance with the doctrine of the Romanists?

6. Romanism *maintains that there are seven sacraments*: Protestant Christianity, *that there are but two*.

In the creed of Pius IV. it is thus written: “There are truly and properly seven sacraments of the new law, instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ, and are necessary

to the salvation of mankind; (although all the sacraments are not necessary to every person,) viz, Baptism, Confirmation, the Lord's Supper, Penance, Extreme Unction, Orders and Matrimony:" and the Council of Trent denounces a curse against any who say that these "were not all instituted by Christ, or that there are more or fewer than seven, or that any of the seven is not truly and properly a sacrament."

Now you may search the New Testament through, and you will find no allusion to any other sacraments than Baptism and the Lord's Supper. When our Lord commissioned his disciples previous to his ascension, he said "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." And when he had met them for the last celebration of the Passover previous to his death, the history informs us that "he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after Supper, saying, this cup is the New Testament in my blood, which is shed for you." Both these sacraments, Baptism and the Lord's Supper, Protestant Christianity acknowledges: in respect to the other five the Bible is entirely silent.

It would be easy to show in respect to various other doctrines, that Romanism contradicts the Bible,—that Protestant Christianity fully accords with it; but I am admonished to proceed to the second point of contrast between the two systems, viz:

## II. Their CONFORMABLENESS TO REASON.

And here let me say that I assign to Reason no higher office as the judge of truth, than to decide whether God has really spoken, and if so, to ascertain the import of what he has said. With every one who acknow-

ledges the authority of Revelation, (and he who denies it is not, even in the loosest sense of the word, a Christian,) the great question, 'What is truth?'—must be ultimately settled by a reference to the Law and the Testimony: for whatever God has revealed we are bound to receive with implicit confidence. But we know that God would reveal nothing that is contrary to Reason, though he may reveal many things which Reason cannot fully comprehend; and hence all those interpretations of Scripture which involve a manifest absurdity, we are bound to reject as false, inasmuch as they are inconsistent with the divine character. Both Protestants and Romanists profess to acknowledge the divine authority of the Bible; and both claim that their respective systems are contained in it: so long then as we make God's word the ultimate standard, we may, without presumption, inquire whether the interpretation of the one or the other is most in accordance with enlightened Reason. We will direct your attention to a few points illustrative of the absurdity of the dogmas of Romanism on the one hand, and of the reasonableness of the doctrines of Protestant Christianity on the other.

1. *Romanism is absurd, in that she claims the prerogative of infallibility; in other words, of entire freedom from all doctrinal error: Protestant Christianity is consistent in the rejection of this claim.*

In the creed of Pius IV. every Romanist thus declares:—"I receive the Holy Scriptures according to that sense which the Holy Mother Church (to whom it belongs to judge of the true sense and interpretation of the Holy Scripture) did and doth hold. Nor will I ever take and interpret it otherwise than according to the unanimous consent of the Fathers."



Now it is surely absurd for the Romish church to claim infallibility, if she cannot herself determine where this infallibility resides. Of her ability to do this we may the better judge, when we have seen what she actually *has* done.

The High Romanists, as they are called, contend for the personal infallibility of the Pope; and maintain that all his decisions in respect to matters of faith, are dictated by the immediate influence of the Holy Ghost. But this claim surely cannot be admitted; for those who have occupied the papal chair at different periods, have flatly contradicted each other. For instance, in the latter part of the sixth century, Gregory decreed that whoever should claim the universal episcopate would be the forerunner of Anti-Christ; but, within a few years, this was actually claimed by Boniface III. and has since been claimed by many of his successors. Here then is the dilemma;—if Gregory was infallible, then his successors in the papal chair must be viewed as the forerunners of Anti-Christ: if his successors were not the forerunners of Anti-Christ, then the decision of Gregory was not according to truth. In either case I need not say what becomes of the pretended infallibility.

There is another consideration which evinces the absurdity of supposing that the Pope is infallible;—it is the fact that not a small number of those who have occupied the papal chair have been men whose lives were openly at war with the plainest precepts of the gospel. There is scarcely a heresy so gross but that some of those who have worn the triple crown have sanctioned it; hardly a crime so flagrant but that some of them have given an example of it. Witness the case of John XII. whom Cardinal Baronius has described as a monster of iniquity, and who was convicted of perjury, blas-

phemy and murder ; of John XXIII. who was utterly destitute of all moral and religious principles, and became the assassin of his predecessor ; of Alexander VI. who yielded himself to an unbridled sensuality and cruelty, and finally died from having taken through mistake a poisonous preparation which he had designed for certain cardinals whom he had invited to an entertainment.— These are a specimen of not a small part of the characters who have occupied the papal chair : and now I ask you whether it is not a gross absurdity to suppose that such men should possess the attribute of infallibility ?— If they were infallible, it was because the God of all wisdom and purity made them so ; but who could believe that such men,—may I not say—such monsters, were meet temples for the residence of the Holy Ghost ? Is it in accordance either with Reason or Scripture to suppose that Jehovah would have *any* communion with them ; especially that, by a supernatural influence, he would qualify them to become the infallible interpreters of his word ?

But the more modern Romanists have generally claimed that this infallibility resides not with the Pope, but with each general council considered as the legitimate representative and organ of the church. But here again, the same difficulty occurs as in the former case :— the decrees of different councils have been in direct opposition to each other. The Council of Constantinople convened in 754 decreed the removal of images, and the entire abolition of image worship ; but the second Council of Nice a few years after reversed this decree, restored the images to the places from which they had been taken, and pronounced an anathema on the council which had decreed their removal. But it is impossible that two decrees of a directly opposite character can

both be right : of course we must look yet farther for the true residence of infallibility.

And hence we find that there is another class of the Romanists who maintain that it resides neither with the Pope alone, nor with a general council alone, but with both united. They contend that the decision of no council is to be regarded as infallible, till it has received the sanction of the Holy See ; and as, in the case just referred to, the Council of Constantinople did not receive that sanction, while the Council of Nice did receive it, therefore they maintain that the fact that the former was denounced by the latter makes nothing against the claim to infallibility ; inasmuch as the former was a spurious council. But you will perceive at once that this argument can have no force until it has first been proved that the Bishop of Rome possesses, by divine right, the power of a *veto* on the doings of a general council, and that his concurrence is necessary to give validity to their decisions. But as this vital point has never yet been established, the argument which is professedly built upon it must pass for nothing.

But the absurdity of this claim appears still farther from the fact that what the church has decreed to be truth in one age, she has decreed to be falsehood in another. In 1215 the fourth Council of Lateran decided that the bread and wine used in the Lord's Supper are changed into the real body and blood, together with the soul and divinity of the Lord Jesus ; and this decision was fully and formally ratified by the then reigning Pontiff, Innocent III ; and therefore, on the principle just referred to, it must have been strictly infallible : of course the same doctrine must have been taught in the church from the very beginning. But how is it in point of fact ? Why it is proved by a uniform and indubitable testimo-

ny, that, for the first five centuries, the church explicitly and even controversially denied that there was any physical change in the elements in virtue of the prayer of consecration; and that this doctrine was refuted in a formal manner by many of the most celebrated fathers of the church as a gross heresy. Is it so then that the church has taught directly opposite doctrines at different periods, and still is infallible?

Yet another consideration which points to the same conclusion is, that the decisions of the church have often been in direct contradiction to the declarations of God's word. If the Bible has settled any thing, it is the obligatory nature of an oath; but yet the third council of Lateran has decreed that no oath is binding that is adverse to the interests of the church. The Bible has also given its most unequivocal sanction to the institution of Marriage, and has declared that "Marriage is honourable in all;" but the second council of Lateran prohibits the marriage of ecclesiastics, and that, not on grounds of expediency, but on grounds of morality. Is it not in the highest degree absurd to acknowledge the authority of the Bible, and yet acknowledge the infallibility of a church whose decisions are directly at war with the Bible?

And finally, if the infallibility which the Romish church claims were any thing better than a phantom, why is there such an entire silence in respect to it during the earlier ages of Christianity? For several centuries we find nothing that even looks toward this claim: but if she had really been conscious that she possessed this wonderful attribute, (and it were impossible that she should have possessed it without being conscious of it,) is it not morally certain that she would have appealed to it in some of the almost innumerable controversies by



which she was early agitated? Is not her silence in respect to this claim proof that she had then never dreamed of it?

I ask you now, is not this doctrine of infallibility so fundamental in the system of the Romanists—take whatever view of it you will—an absurdity? If the alleged infallibility exists, it must surely exist somewhere; but can we believe that it really does exist, when even the infallible Church herself cannot tell where? Is not Romanism absurd in urging such a claim? Is not Protestantism consistent in rejecting it?

2. *Romanism is chargeable with absurdity in enjoining the worship of saints: Protestant Christianity evinces her consistency, by recognising no other object of religious worship than the one only living and true God.*

I am aware that it has been maintained by some that the Romanists worship saints in no other sense than that of invoking their intercession with God, just as we ask the prayers of the living in our behalf; but let the following extracts from the "Collects and Hymns to the Saints," as published in 1520, show how far this impression is correct. "Holy Mother of God, who hast worthily merited to conceive Him whom the whole world could not comprehend; by thy pious intervention wash away our sins, that so being redeemed by thee, we may be able to ascend to the seat of everlasting glory, where thou abidest with thy Son forever. . . . Let our voice first celebrate Mary through whom the rewards of life are given unto us. . . . May the holy assembly of the angels, and the illustrious troop of the archangels, now blot out our sins by granting to us the high glory of Heaven." . . . O George, renowned martyr . . . in our soul and inmost heart we beseech thee that, with all the



faithful, we being washed from our sins, may be joined to the citizens of Heaven: that so, together with thee we may joyfully be in glory, and that our lips with glory may render praises to Christ. . . . O martyr Christopher, make us to be in mind worthy of the love of God. . . . O William, thou good shepherd, father and patron of the clergy, cleanse us in our agony; grant us aid; remove the filthiness of our life; and grant the joys of a celestial crown. . . . O ye eleven thousand glorious maids, roses of martyrdom, defend me in life by affording to me your assistance; and show yourselves to me in death by bringing the last consolation."

Such are the authorized prayers of the Romish church; and who will say that they do not respect blessings which God only can bestow? If they are designed to represent the saints *merely* as intercessors, then I have only to say that they do not fairly admit of any such construction; and it must have been known when they were framed that, in respect to the great mass of people at least, they could have no other effect than to lead them into error. And the whole history of the church in reference to this subject shows that this effect has been fully realized.

But suppose we admit, what some of the Romanists claim, that in their religious worship they recognise departed saints only as intercessors;—still, I maintain that even this admission leaves them chargeable with gross absurdity. Am I asked why it is more absurd to ask the intercession of departed saints than of those who are alive? I answer, in the first place, because the Scripture fully authorizes the latter; but it no where even seems to furnish a warrant for the former. I answer again, that neither Reason nor Scripture has given us any intimation that the dead hear, or can hear, the prayers

which are offered to them ; but both render an opposite testimony. Says the wise man, speaking of the dead, " Their love, and their envy, and their hatred, is perished ; neither have they any more a portion forever in any thing that is done under the sun." And Reason decides that, inasmuch as they are finite beings, and of course cannot be every where present, it is impossible that they should hear the prayers which may be offered to them at the same instant from opposite parts of the globe.— But we know that the living intercessor hears our requests, because he is present with us, and we actually hear the petitions which he offers in our behalf. He who supplicates the intercessions of the dead, gropes in deep darkness : he who asks the prayers of the living, walks in the broad light of heaven.

But we shall not have an adequate view of the absurdity of this species of worship, until we have contemplated more particularly the character of its *objects*.— Who then are the saints of the Romish church ? If you will know fully who they are, you must read fifty-four ponderous folio volumes ; and even then you have by no means reached the end of the catalogue. Some of these, it must be acknowledged, were illustrious for their virtues—men of whom the world was not worthy. But there are others who never had an existence but in the legends of the church ; the story of whose lives is an outrage upon Reason and common sense. Witness the gigantick Saint Christopher, who is represented as having carried Christ over an arm of the sea ; and the illustrious Saint Francis, who, according to their own accounts, stripped himself of his clothes, and ran about, preaching to birds and beasts. And there are others still on the list of the canonized, whose names are only worthy to be consigned to the blackest page in the annals of crime.

I may mention as an example the notorious Hildebrand,—one of the most ambitious and unprincipled tyrants which the world has ever seen ;—Thomas A. Becket, whose name figures so conspicuously on the records of rebellion and treason ; and Pius V. whose glory it was that he had burnt more hereticks than almost any of his predecessors. Such are some of the characters which the Romish church has included in the catalogue of her saints. Admitting that it were reasonable to invoke the aid of those who are *really* saints in Heaven, yet would it not be preposterous to render even the lowest religious homage to such as either never had an existence, or lived only to curse the world by their follies and crimes ?

I might mention too, as being, if possible, still more absurd, the devotion that is paid to *images* and *relics*, and especially to the *cross*. I am well aware that some of the more intelligent Romanists tell us that the veneration which is rendered to these inanimate objects is not strictly religious worship ; and that they are designed only to aid a devotional spirit by bringing into exercise the principle of association. To this I reply that, even upon this principle, they are intended to exalt the mind only to the objects with which they are associated ;—of course the devout contemplation of the relics of the saints, can terminate in nothing more exalted than the worship of the saints. And this is in accordance with that canon of the church which declares that “the images and relics of Christ and the saints are to be duly honoured, venerated, or worshipped ; and that in this veneration and worship those are venerated which are represented by them.” But will any one believe that the homage of the ignorant multitude who bow before these relics with expressions of adoration, and who are

constantly taught that they are to be 'venerated or worshipped,' does not terminate upon the objects which are before them; that it has not in it all the elements of a gross idolatry?

If I have succeeded in showing the absurdity of the worship of saints, relicks, and images, which constitutes so prominent a feature of Romanism, I surely need not detain you to illustrate the reasonableness of Protestant Christianity in allowing the worship of but the one living and true God. I therefore proceed to remark,

3. That Romanism *affronts human Reason by maintaining the doctrine of Transubstantiation, or the change of the elements in the Eucharist into "the real body and blood, the soul and divinity," of Jesus Christ: That Protestant Christianity, is consistent with the dictates of Reason, in regarding the elements as merely set apart from a common to a sacred use.*

The doctrine of the Romanists on this subject is thus expressed in the creed of Pius IV:—"I believe that in the most holy sacrament of the Eucharist, there is really and substantially the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ; and that there is a conversion of the whole substance of the wine into his blood; which conversion the Catholic church calls Transubstantiation."

You all know that this doctrine is founded on the literal interpretation of the words of our Saviour in the original institution of the ordinance—"This is my body broken for you, &c." But surely there is no *necessity* for understanding this language literally; for while the Scripture abounds with figurative expressions, it is the very nature of a sacrament to represent some invisible grace or benefit by an outward sign or figure. And be-



sides, even the Romanists cannot deny that, in the institution of this very ordinance, several figurative expressions are employed; as, for instance, the cup is put for the wine contained in the cup; and his blood is said *then* to be shed, and his body to be broken, though this did not actually occur till after the ordinance was instituted. And while there is no necessity to put a literal construction on this language, every principle of just interpretation forbids it. Jesus Christ is called in Scripture a door, a vine, a rock; and there is precisely the same evidence that he is substantially changed into these and many other things to which he is compared, as there is of the doctrine of Transubstantiation.

But the absurdity of this doctrine appears principally from the fact that it contradicts the testimony of sense, and thus undermines the whole fabrick of Christianity. What was the evidence on which our Lord and his Apostles chiefly relied, to prove the divinity of their mission? Undoubtedly it was that furnished by miracles; and had it not been for their miraculous powers, there is not the least ground for believing that Christianity would ever have gained a footing in the world. But through what medium did the early converts to Christianity receive this supernatural testimony to the truth of the gospel? Certainly through the medium of sense; and if it can be proved that the senses are not to be trusted, then the evidence of miracles, the evidence even of that cardinal fact in Christianity,—the Resurrection of Jesus, is gone. But the doctrine of Transubstantiation contradicts the testimony of the senses in the most palpable manner; for what two things can you imagine more unlike each other than a small piece of bread and the entire body of a man? If then this doctrine was taught by the Apostles, they surely must have contradicted



themselves; for just so far as they persuaded those whom they addressed of its truth, they persuaded them not to trust their senses; and yet the grand argument by which they enforced all their doctrines was built on a directly opposite principle,—viz, that their senses must be trusted. We come unavoidably to the conclusion that, if the testimony of the senses is to be relied on, the doctrine of Transubstantiation is false; and if it is not to be relied on, that there is no evidence that the gospel is true.

But it may be asked whether God cannot impose upon the senses, and make things which are not appear as things which are. I answer, it is not for me to limit Omnipotence. You may farther ask whether, if he has revealed to us the fact that he does this, we are not bound to believe him? Yes, undoubtedly, if we are assured that he has made such a revelation; but how can we ever be assured of this if the testimony of the senses cannot be relied on? Nay, admitting the Scriptures to be a divine revelation, and the words—"This is my body," to be taken literally, what more evidence have we that these words are in the Bible, than every man has that the bread in the sacrament remains unchanged? I repeat then, if the doctrine of Transubstantiation be admitted, I know not where to plant my foot for the defence of that religion of which it is professedly a part; nay, I see not but that I must resign myself at once to universal skepticism.

Protestant Christianity views in the sacramental elements the emblems of the body and blood of the Lord; and these emblems are of a most significant and impressive character. In the prayers which are offered in connexion with the service she recognises indeed a consecrating act; but it is an act which leaves the elements possessed of the same properties which naturally belong

to them. What appears to be bread she regards as actually bread, and what appears to be wine, as actually wine; while in each of them she beholds an affecting memorial of the Redeemer's death. Here is no contradiction of sense, or Reason, or Scripture; every thing is as it seems to be; and the Christian, in celebrating the ordinance, instead of being obliged to reflect, if he reflects at all, that there is gross absurdity involved in what he is doing, is conscious of being engaged in a strictly reasonable service.

Without extending my remarks farther on this article, upon which it would be easy to enlarge to almost any extent, I pass to another point in the contrast between the two systems; viz,

### III. THEIR CLAIM TO ANTIQUITY.

And here the Romish church profess to occupy strong ground: they triumphantly ask, 'Where was *our* religion before the time of Luther?—and at the same time appeal to a remote antiquity in justification of their own system. My first remark in regard to this claim is, that the antiquity of any religious system is not to be taken as evidence of its truth;—otherwise both Judaism and Paganism must have stronger claims upon our belief than Christianity; for when she appeared in the world, they had both existed for ages. I observe again, that the systems held by Romanists and by Protestants are in many respects alike; and in regard to all these particulars, both may fairly claim an equal antiquity. All that is embraced in the Apostle's creed, which received the sanction of the first four general councils, Protestants cordially consent to: the points on which they differ are chiefly those which are contained in the creed of Pius IV. which may be considered as one of the grand formularies of the Romish church. And in respect to these

I may boldly assert, and appeal to ecclesiastical history to justify the assertion, that they are all innovations.—If Protestant Christianity is to be considered as taking its origin in the Reformation, then no doubt Romanism has the precedence in point of age; for the very idea of a reformation takes for granted the previous existence of errors and corruptions; but if, by Protestant Christianity, we mean the doctrines which Protestants hold in contradistinction from the Romanists, (and this surely is its only legitimate meaning,) then I maintain that the Protestant faith may fairly claim the greater antiquity. Let us see if it is not so.

Take for instance the doctrine that *saints, and images, and relicks, are the proper objects of worship*—if the testimony of the most unexceptionable ecclesiastical historians is to be relied on, this is a corruption of genuine Christianity which was unknown for several of the first ages.

The invocation of *departed saints* was first introduced towards the close of the fifth century; but it was not till the sixth century that temples were erected in honour of them; and not till the latter part of the ninth century that the Roman Pontiffs arrogantly and impiously assumed the prerogative of constituting them objects of religious veneration, and maintained that their prayers and merits were efficacious to procure blessings for the living.

Concerning the worship of *images*, ecclesiastical history is entirely silent for the first three centuries. Their first introduction into Christian churches seems to have been in Spain, about the beginning of the fourth century; and though they were designed merely as ornaments, yet the use of them, even in that way, was almost immediately condemned by a council as a dangerous inno-

vation. But notwithstanding this practice was thus frowned upon in its very beginning, within about a century from that time it had become common, and within less than two centuries, almost universal. Shortly after its introduction, the images came to be regarded, not as mere ornaments, but as helps to devotion ; and in the natural progress of error and superstition, they rose, in the eighth century, to the dignity of becoming real objects of worship. I know many of the Romish divines have maintained that the worship of images is as ancient as Christianity herself ; and in proof of this have alleged a decree said to have been made by the Apostles in a council at Antioch, commanding the Christians to guard against error in respect to the object of their worship, by making and worshipping images of the Saviour ; but a sufficient refutation of this is found in the fact that there is no notice taken of any such decree or council, until seven hundred years after the Apostolick times, when the controversy in respect to the worship of images had commenced, and there was occasion for looking after the best authority that could be found to justify the usage.

In respect to the worship of *relics*, the Romanists claim that the practice is to be distinctly traced to the apostolick age ; and they attempt to justify this claim by referring to the case of the martyr Stephen ; of whom it is said that "devout men carried him to his burial and made great lamentation over him ;" as if this declaration proved that the early believers revered the relics of Stephen, and that too under the sanction of the Apostles themselves. I need not say how little even of plausibility there is in such a deduction. The truth is that there is no historical evidence that the worship of relics, in any proper sense of that phrase, existed for two or three of



the first centuries. What finally became the doctrine of the Romish church on this subject grew up from a very small beginning; and though it is not easy to trace it in all the different stages of its progress, we are completely sustained by ecclesiastical history in denying to it the antiquity which it would claim.

Again: The Romish church maintains that *there are seven sacraments*; and yet, if any thing is to be known on this subject from history, down to a comparatively recent period, there were reckoned only two. The only sacraments of which we hear any thing for more than eleven hundred years after the introduction of Christianity are Baptism and the Lord's Supper; but, about the middle of the twelfth century, the doctrine began to be taught by certain individuals that there were seven sacraments; though it was not till near the middle of the fifteenth century that it was formally adopted by the Pope and a general council, as one of the doctrines of the Romish church. Of course not one of the five sacraments which were added to the original number was instituted by Christ, or even dreamed of until many ages after his ascension.

The same general remark applies to the doctrine of *the change of the elements in the Eucharist into the real body and blood of the Lord Jesus*:—though it grew up gradually in the church, there is the united testimony of antiquity to mark it as a corruption of the primitive faith. The most celebrated fathers during the first six centuries, such as Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Irenæus, Cyprian, Origen and Austin, have expressed substantially the same views of this subject as are held by nearly every Protestant communion. The doctrine of the corporeal presence of Christ in the Eucharist was first started in the controversy respecting the worship of

images, in the early part of the eighth century. It was, however, immediately opposed by the Synod of Constantinople, but shortly after received the sanction of the second council of Nice. It was first regularly drawn out and digested by Paschase, abbot of Corby, in the ninth century; and was finally established in its present form in the year 1215 by Pope Innocent III. in the fourth council of Lateran. It deserves to be remarked that when the doctrine was first urged by Paschase, it was immediately opposed as an error of recent origin and of only partial adoption. And the term *Transubstantiation*, by which the doctrine is designated, is even more modern than the doctrine itself; it having been invented by Stephen, Bishop of Autun, in the thirteenth century. These are the simple facts which ecclesiastical history furnishes in relation to this doctrine: judge ye how far they sustain its claim to antiquity.

By one of the dogmas of the Romish church, *the clergy are doomed to perpetual celibacy*; but need I say that this has not been so from the beginning? Until the fourth century it does not appear that the doctrine which the Scriptures teach, and which Protestants hold, that "Marriage is honourable in all," had ever been called in question; but in the course of that century marriage was forbidden to the clergy by Pope Siricius; though the prohibition seems, for a considerable time, to have been but little regarded. Celibacy was effectually imposed on the clergy of the Eastern church about the close of the seventh century; but it was never fully established in the Western or Romish church until about the end of the eleventh century; and even then it was complained of by many writers as an intolerable burden.—Pope Gregory VII. was instrumental of its final establishment; and his object seems to have been to with-

draw the clergy as much as possible from all other interests, and subject them more entirely to his authority.

If the time would permit, I might extend this illustration to the doctrine of purgatory and indulgences, to the practice of praying for the dead, of auricular confession, of withholding the cup from the laity in the ordinance of the Supper, and I venture to add, of every other doctrine and practice that is peculiar to the Romish church, and show you, by an appeal to authentick history, that not one of them is as old as Christianity herself. In some cases indeed, they have come in so gradually and silently that it is not easy to trace their history ; but in every case it is easy to point to a time, and that too subsequent to the apostolick age, when we find no record of their existence. On the other hand, the religious doctrines and usages which generally prevail in the Protestant church are substantially the same with those which are proved by the most abundant testimony to have existed in the early periods of Christianity. I repeat then, the claim which Romanism makes to antiquity cannot be sustained on any other ground than that of mere assertion : the Protestant faith in all its leading features was the faith of the primitive church, and every departure from it was originally marked and opposed as an error.

Let us contemplate the contrast between these systems in respect to

#### IV. THEIR ADAPTATION TO HUMAN NATURE.

— Their adaptation *to develop the intellectual faculties, and to form the religious character.*

— *To develop the intellectual faculties.*

1. Romanism discourages or prohibits the free use of the Holy Scriptures : Protestant Christianity would give them to the whole human family.

The Bible is the grand depository of religious truth. It contains every doctrine and precept that God has been pleased to reveal to the world; and whatever is not found here is either not true, or not important. Leaving out of view the bearing which the truths of Revelation have upon our condition and destiny as sinful and immortal beings, they are wonderfully adapted to invigorate and exalt the intellectual powers. The mind, in contemplating them, is brought directly to the source of all wisdom; is lifted above the grovelling objects of sense to a contemplation of the perfections and government of Jehovah; of the sublime economy of the intellectual and moral universe. Here are recorded events of the most wonderful character,—events which bring out the secrets of the human heart, and show man to himself as by an undeceiving mirror; and the advantage which this record has over every other is, that it is the infallible testimony of a God of truth. And beside the history which this book contains, here are specimens of reasoning, of poetry, of eloquence, which unite the power of a comprehensive and brilliant genius with the majesty of God's own inspiration. It results from the very nature of the human mind that the study of such a book must enlarge and quicken its faculties; must create a thirst for general knowledge, and awaken a spirit of inquiry in respect to the works and ways of God. Hence we have a right to expect that, just in proportion as the free use of the Bible is encouraged, the mind will be delivered from a habit of indolence and apathy, and wax bold and vigorous in its operations.

Now keep in view this influence which the Bible exerts upon the mind of man, and say whether Romanism or Protestantism is the more favourable to intellectual culture. The Romish church, as we have already seen,



has, by a positive edict, prohibited the reading of the Scriptures in the vulgar tongue, on the ground that, if this liberty “be indiscriminately allowed to every one, the temerity of men will cause more evil than good to arise from it.” And hence to circulate the Scriptures among the common people is almost universally regarded at this day in Catholic countries as a crime. Some of you will remember a fact to which I am about to allude, which occurred not long since in Switzerland: many copies of the Bible had been distributed in a certain district through the benevolence of some Protestant missionary, and had been received with much gratitude and gladness; but the moment the priest discovered it, he required each copy at the hands of the individual who had received it, and gathered them all into a common bonfire. I am aware that this state of things does not exist in our own country, and that publick opinion here will not tolerate it; but judging from the canons of the church on the one hand, and from what actually takes place in Roman Catholic countries on the other, I ask you whether it seems likely that the tolerance which is here manifested in respect to the reading of the Bible is more a matter of choice or of necessity? I say the *tolerance* which is here manifested—for at best it is nothing more: you see nothing in the movements of the Romish clergy to indicate a *wish* that the Scriptures may be freely circulated among their charges; and, so far as I know, their circulation in any degree is little else than a matter of self-defence. And as to the *edition* of the Bible which they circulate,—though no one can deny that it contains all the great truths of Christianity, yet the original is grossly perverted to sanction some of the doctrines of Romanism; as, for instance, instead of “Repent and be converted,” the Douay version reads,

“Do penance and be converted.” But the truth is, the great mass of the Romanists are kept in absolute ignorance of the Bible; and without intending the least disrespect towards them either as individuals or as a body, I venture to appeal to your own observation, so far as it has extended, for the truth of this assertion. It is one of the glories of Protestant Christianity on the other hand, not only that she allows the Bible to all, not only that she fully recognises the principle that it is designed for all, but that she labours to put it into the hands of all. Hence the almost countless number of copies of the Scriptures which have been printed in various languages since the Reformation. Hence the numerous societies which have sprung up in different parts of Protestant Christendom, for the circulation of the Scriptures not only in Christian but in Pagan lands. Hence the universal impression that the Bible must be sent over the whole earth, before we can reasonably look for the world’s renovation. But we have seen that the Bible is a fountain of knowledge: I ask then whether Protestantism is not the friend, whether Romanism is not the foe, of intellectual improvement?

2. Romanism *does its utmost to repress the spirit of free inquiry*: Protestant Christianity, *to awaken and cherish it.*

If the Romish church be, as she claims to be, infallible in all her decisions in respect to the true meaning of Scripture, there is an obvious reason why she should frown upon every thing like free inquiry concerning the principles of religious faith. The great question ‘What is truth?’—come from whomsoever it may, she is always ready authoritatively to settle by a reference to her own canons; and if the infallibility of her canons be taken for granted, there certainly can be no occasion ever to

appeal from them. And in attributing this oracular character to her own interpretations of the Bible, she wonderfully accommodates the apathy and indolence of the multitude, who are more than willing to be excused from the labour of intelligently forming their own opinions. To investigate the various parts of divine truth, and diligently to compare one part with another, requires both time and effort: if then there are formulas in which I can be certain that the various doctrines and duties of Scripture are drawn out with perfect accuracy, and in which I have the very mind of the Spirit, is there not some apology at least for my resting in these results, and avoiding the labour of personal inquiry? In strict accordance with this view, the Romish church, even where, by special indulgence, she grants the use of the Bible, still chains the mind down to her own interpretation of it: whatever it may be found to contain must be brought, even though it be by torture, into accordance with her authorized canons.

And perhaps it may not be a violation of charity to hazard a conjecture as to the reason why the Romish church is so averse to allowing the privilege of free inquiry. If I were to express an opinion, I should certainly say that it was to be attributed to a secret consciousness on the part of those who are most interested in the continuance of the system—I mean especially the higher order of ecclesiastics—that it would not bear the light; and that it could not be subjected to the test of an honest and rigid examination, but that it would instantly fall under its own weight. Is not this a sufficient explanation of the fact that she makes it a sin to doubt the correctness of any of her dogmas, as truly as we regard it a sin to call in question the infallible decisions of the Holy Ghost?

Protestant Christianity, on the contrary, recognises the right of private judgment in matters of religion; and while she allows it as a privilege, she enjoins it as a duty, that each one should search the Scriptures and ultimately form his own religious opinions, for himself. As she places the Bible in the hands of all classes indiscriminately, she appeals to every man's common sense, and intelligence and conscience, to decide, in view of a coming retribution, what it contains; and leaves him to form his conclusions on this subject as unembarrassed as on any other.

I ask again, is not Romanism adapted to keep the mind in a state of bondage and darkness? It were a small privilege even to possess the Bible and be allowed to read it, apart from the right of judging of the meaning of its contents: for if I am bound to believe that particular doctrines are contained in the Scriptures, I may as well receive those doctrines without examining the Scriptures at all; lest the result of an examination should be to perplex me with doubts in respect to articles of faith, from which, after all, I have not the liberty to dissent. Suppose the Romanist to sit down to the reading of the Bible, he is in no condition for the unembarrassed exercise of his faculties. His business is not to inquire for himself the meaning of what he reads, but simply to inquire what construction the church hath put upon it; and then implicitly to yield his faith to her decision. Admit, if you will, that, in coming in contact with the Bible, he is brought into a field of light; yet what availeth this to his own intellectual illumination, if he may not have the privilege to open the eye of his understanding upon it? Where another mind, acting under different influences, would put forth vigorous efforts, and rise to lofty heights, *his* mind is entirely pas-



sive, or is occupied only in endeavouring to torture the declarations of Scripture into a harmony with the canons of the church. I do not deny that he may be inquisitive in respect to other subjects ; but in regard to whatever belongs to the most momentous of all subjects—that which more than any other is adapted to quicken and exalt the mind of man, he tamely surrenders the legitimate use of his faculties ; and I submit it to you whether a restraint thus imposed in respect to one grand department of human thought, is not likely to cripple in a great degree the intellectual energies, and lead to a general habit of mental inaction ? But the religion of Protestants, as it allows no such restraint, but encourages every man to bring the full vigor of his powers to the investigation of religious truth, opens an illimitable field for intellectual improvement. It does not indeed permit him to invent new doctrines, or to connect with those which are actually revealed his own speculations, however ingenious, or plausible, or even sublime ; but it allows him to judge for himself what the Scripture contains, and to expatiate in the broad field of revealed truth without being trammelled by any self-constituted infallible interpreter. And though I do not undertake to say that the man who exercises his faculties diligently in the investigation of divine truth is of course a proficient in other departments of knowledge ; yet I do say that it is the tendency of a diligent study of God's word, not only directly to invigorate the mind, but to produce or increase a relish for intellectual exercise in relation to other subjects. It will not be easy to find an intellect that has familiarized itself to the study of the Bible in the free and proper exercise of its faculties, which has not also been quickened and enlarged by being brought in con-

tact with other forms of truth, and being employed in other modes of investigation.

3. Romanism *occupies the mind, to a great extent, with contradictions and absurdities*: Protestant Christianity *presents for its contemplation a consistent and reasonable system.*

Romanism proposes doctrines which are not only above Reason but contrary to Reason. For instance, she requires her votaries to believe that the same body can be in different places at the same time; that bread and wine, in the repetition of a form of words, lose their own natural properties and become an entirely different substance; and that the senses give a false testimony in reference to one of the plainest matters of fact. She requires them also to believe that there is a mysterious power of working miracles lodged in the relicks of dead men;—the power of healing diseases, of averting calamities, and of defending against the assaults and devices of the devil. Indeed you may go through the whole list of her peculiar dogmas, and I challenge you to find one which does not bear the marks of gross error or palpable absurdity; which is not manifestly at war with Reason, or Scripture, or both. And is it possible that the human intellect should thrive in such an atmosphere? Is there any thing which will be more likely to impart to it an imbecile and dwarfish character, than this constant contact with error and absurdity?

Protestant Christianity asks you to believe nothing for which she does not furnish the clearest evidence.—Some of the truths which she inculcates are indeed *above* Reason; but they never have been, and never can be, shown to be *contrary* to it; and such truths it is surely reasonable to believe upon the testimony of God. The general system of doctrine which she inculcates is of the

purest and noblest kind ; it is the appropriate aliment of the mind ; and it cannot be received and digested without imparting new vigor to all the faculties. I know that the mind may be actively employed upon error as well as upon truth ; in attempting to defend the most palpable absurdities, as well as in studying and vindicating the most reasonable and scriptural system. But in the one case it will become disproportioned, if not absolutely monstrous ; it will come to find its favourite element in the region of conjecture, and fallacy, and contradiction : in the other case it will develop itself in fair and goodly proportions, and will acquire not only a habit of activity, but an honest and safe direction.

I have spoken of the contrast between these systems in respect to their adaptation to develop the intellectual faculties : Let us contemplate them now in regard to the influence which they are respectively fitted to exert *in forming the religious character*.

1. *It is the tendency of Romanism to produce a blind faith ; of Protestant Christianity to produce an intelligent faith.*

Romanism, as we have already seen, requires her votaries to believe on the authority of the church. If an intelligent Romanist finds himself grappling with an absurdity, and happens to institute an inquiry in respect to the grounds on which he must receive it and be reconciled to it, the only answer is that it has been decreed by the infallible church, and therefore it must be true. And so, whatever of *truth* the system embraces, is received, not upon the authority of a God of truth, but upon the authority of the church,—the authority of Popes, or councils, or of both united. Is this an intelligent or blind faith ? Is it a faith in divine or human testimony ?

Protestant Christianity asks you to receive nothing but upon the testimony of God. She does not indeed proscribe the use of creeds and confessions; but she asks nobody to acknowledge them, except as they are perceived to be in accordance with God's word; and she attributes no authority to them independently of the source from which they were derived. If you have a human creed presented to you, what you have to do with it, on the principles of Protestantism, is to refer it to the Law and the Testimony, and to receive or reject it according to its agreement or disagreement with that standard. Having previously settled the point that the Bible contains a revelation from that God who cannot lie, you unhesitatingly receive whatever you believe it contains; and you desire no better reason,—you can have no better reason, for receiving it, than the fact that God has revealed it. Hence your faith becomes a rational act. It is a simple reliance on the testimony of God; and can be defended on the strictest principles of Reason.

Now is it not manifest that these two different kinds of faith are opposite in their nature and their tendencies? The one is the legitimate exercise of an intelligent principle, and is worthy to constitute a leading element in the religious character: it is the simple homage which the mind renders to the authority of God. The other is but an ignoble exercise of the human intellect; it recognises an authority in the church which God never gave; and submits to the dictation of frail and fallible mortals, where it is acknowledged that God has spoken, and the record of what he has said is open to all men. I do not say but that the faith of the Romanist may, in some respects, operate as *powerfully* as the faith of the Protestant; because the former has so much to do with



the senses, and the eye of course affects the heart; but does it involve the same degree of reverence for the character of God? Does it imply the same homage to the authority and truth of God? Is it equally adapted to elevate the soul to communion with God? Lay out of view, if you please, the different *doctrines* which faith receives in the two cases, I maintain that there is that in its very nature, as a reliance on the testimony of God or the testimony of man in relation to a subject on which God has spoken, which is fitted in the one case, to exalt, in the other, to debase, not only the intellectual but the moral nature.

2. Romanism *tends to a gross and carnal worship: Protestant Christianity to a spiritual worship.*

Romanism appeals chiefly to the *senses* and the *imagination*. If you look into the Romish ritual, you cannot fail to be struck with the fact that it has so much to do with external and visible objects; and if you enter a Romish church at the hour of their devotional service, you will perceive that there is every thing to indicate that the objects which meet the eye are those which principally occupy the mind. I have already adverted to the fact that many of the Romanists claim that the pictures and images with which their churches abound are intended only as helps to devotion; but in every case in which the image purports to represent any thing short of the infinite God, (and an attempt to represent *him*, I hardly need say, is a direct violation of his command,) it is a help to nothing better than gross idolatry. But however it may be with a few more enlightened individuals, I cannot resist the impression, even from what I have myself witnessed, that the multitude worship the image, and nothing else. Indeed I am inclined to think, from the very constitution of human nature, that this

mode of worship could not long be practised, even by the more intelligent and reflecting class, but that this effect of which I have spoken would, in a considerable degree, be realized.

Protestant Christianity makes *her* appeal to the *intellect* and the *affections*. When her votaries would engage in the exercises of devotion, she summons them to a purely spiritual service: instead of surrounding them with splendid images on which the eye and the mind may fasten, she cuts them off, so far as possible, from all intercourse with external objects. The Being whom they worship is an invisible Being: the homage with which they approach him is the homage of the heart. Indeed there is not a more deeply spiritual duty than this in which it is possible for man to engage: the understanding, the conscience, the affections, the whole soul, must be awake, in order to its being acceptably performed.

Moreover, Romanism keeps the mind conversant in religious worship with *objects* of a gross and grovelling character. Such are all the representations which are made of the Supreme Being, the images of the Virgin Mary and the saints, and the relicks of the dead. And here I cannot forbear to say that the manner in which the Lord Jesus Christ—"his body and blood, soul and divinity"—is represented in the Eucharist, can hardly fail to exert a powerful influence in derogating from his divine dignity. Is it possible that the Romanist can believe that he literally eats the body and drinks the blood of the Saviour of the world,—that he takes him into his hands and into his lips, so that he becomes incorporated with his own body from week to week,—I ask, is it possible that he can believe this, and yet che-

rich towards him that awful reverence which is due to the Majesty of the Son of God?

On the other hand, the objects to which Protestant Christianity introduces the soul in religious worship are all worthy and glorious. She allows no image of Jehovah, because He himself does not allow it, and because no image can even faintly shadow forth his perfections. She acknowledges no intercessor in Heaven but Jesus Christ, "the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of his person." She inculcates reliance on no other aid than that of the Holy Spirit, who is regarded in Heaven as worthy of everlasting praise. She leads the mind into a broad field of heavenly truth, in which it may wander forever, and yet be forever advancing from glory to glory.

If such be the nature, and such the objects, of the worship, which Romanism and Protestant Christianity respectively enjoin, you will easily discover the opposite influences which they must exert on the religious character. You have only to bear in mind a law of human nature to which I have formerly adverted,—viz, that the objects with which our thoughts and affections are most conversant, necessarily give, in a great degree, a complexion to the character, to arrive at the conclusion that the Romish worship is fitted to leave upon the soul unworthy impressions, and the Protestant worship to impress upon it the image of the heavenly.

3. Romanism *tends to a spirit of self-righteousness*: Protestant Christianity, *to a spirit of humility*.

Look, for instance, at the Romish doctrine of justification by works. If the sinner asks how he is to be justified before God, he is answered out of the canons of the church that "the good works of justified persons are truly and properly meritorious, and that they who

hold the contrary are worthy of an anathema." And what is the legitimate effect of this doctrine but to cherish a self-righteous spirit? If the doctrine be believed, such a spirit must be the necessary result; for the one is the exact counterpart of the other: if it be true, then the indulgence of such a spirit cannot be sin; for the one is the legitimate result of the other.—Look at the doctrine of supererogation, which, while it includes the doctrine of justification by works, puts an immense amount of superfluous merit at the disposal of the Roman Pontiff, to be distributed according to the exigencies of offenders on the one hand, and their ability to purchase it on the other. And if this is not fitted to minister to a spirit of self-righteousness point me to a doctrine, if you can, which *has* that tendency. Look at the splendid ritual of the Romish church;—at the number of external observances which it enjoins, and the importance it attaches to them; at the long and tedious pilgrimages which it prescribes, and the grounds on which it urges them,—and say whether this is not an admirable contrivance to make man feel that he has fairly earned his own salvation. Is it easy to conceive that a religious character can be formed under such an influence, without being essentially pharisaical.

Protestant Christianity in nearly every form is adapted to awaken and cherish a spirit of humility. I say in *nearly* every one; for it must be acknowledged that, while the great mass of the Reformed churches are agreed in respect to all the fundamental truths of Christianity, there are some who hold doctrines which lead to the same result in this respect, though in a different way, with the doctrines of the Romanists;—that is, they make man's salvation depend, not on a round of senseless observances, but on a round of moral duties;—Christ



and his atonement being, in both cases, to a great extent, practically lost sight of. But the great mass of Protestant churches acknowledge a system, the tendency of which is to bring man into the dust in the deep consciousness of his own guilt. The doctrine of justification by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, while it cuts off the sinner from every hope of Heaven in virtue of his own doings, makes him entirely dependant for salvation on an unmerited and most gracious divine interposition; and every other part of the system to which this doctrine belongs, exhibits him in an attitude of utter ruin and helplessness; an attitude in which he cannot but perceive that the deepest self-abasement becomes him. In the simplicity and purity of her worship too, Protestant Christianity points to the cultivation of the same spirit; for she turns the mind away from all external objects upon the invisible and infinitely Holy God; and instead of a course of unmeaning ceremonies, the performance of which would only cherish a self-complacent temper, she requires the simple homage of the heart, and stations man as a dependant suppliant, not before a picture or an image, but at the foot of the eternal throne. I am well aware that one may *professedly* hold the doctrines of the Protestant faith, and go through the forms of the Protestant worship, and yet be a stranger to evangelical humility; but if he is *really* a believer, if he is *really* a worshipper, rely on it he is truly humble.

4. Romanism *has a tendency to mislead the conscience*: Protestant Christianity, *to give it a right direction.*

Romanism produces the effect which I have here attributed to it, in the first place, by *obscuring the rule of moral rectitude*. That rule, as it is given to us in the word of God, is plain and simple; and beside the rule

itself, we have there various expositions of it, to facilitate its application to all the departments of human conduct. And all these expositions, whether in the form of doctrines or precepts, are in perfect harmony with the rule, and are adapted to shed a brighter light upon the path of duty. The Romish church obscures this rule by recognising as canonical the Apocryphal books; in which there is a strange mixture of truth and falsehood, of the reasonable and the absurd, of the grave and the ludicrous: and more than that, she maintains that her oral traditions which are generally a mere mass of error and absurdity, are at least of equal authority with the Scriptures themselves. You will readily perceive that these additions to the perfect rule of faith which God has given, are adapted to throw the rule itself into comparative obscurity; and as this is the standard by which conscience forms her decisions, in proportion as the standard becomes obscure, she is liable to be misled.

But there are some of the doctrines and practices of the Romish church, which do more than obscure the scriptural standard of morality: they directly *contradict* it. What else is the doctrine of indulgences than a palpable contradiction of the rule of righteousness, not only as it is written in the Bible, but as it is inscribed on the moral constitution of man? And what else is the doctrine that no faith is to be kept with hereticks,—that even an oath loses its obligatory power, if the policy of the church requires that its observance should be dispensed with? Is it possible that such doctrines as these should be held, should actually be reduced to practice, and the original authority of the conscience remain unimpaired? Can any man receive these doctrines without making up his mind that the guide within is an impostor, whose suggestions are not to be trusted? Can

any one even try to believe them without offering an insult to his own conscience?

Still farther: Romanism, in several of its doctrines, *makes provision against the reproaches of conscience*. Suppose a wretch has committed some desperate crime, and conscience for a moment gets the better of him, and holds up over him her whip of scorpions,—to whom or to what can he resort as an antidote to his trouble?—Why resort to the priest in an act of auricular confession, and receive from him the assurance of a complete absolution; while the priest receives in return a pecuniary recompense for this exercise of his forgiving power.—And then his conscience is at rest, and he can rush back into scenes of crime with the full conviction that, as the past is blotted out, so there is also adequate provision for the future. Tell me what deserves the name of trifling with conscience, if it be not such a course as this! Is there not provision here to counteract every twinge of remorse, every flutter of fear, which guilt may occasion in the contemplation of futurity?

Protestant Christianity is, in all these respects, the exact opposite of Romanism. She never tampers with God's rule, by acknowledging traditions which would go to obscure it, or by enjoining practices which would serve to nullify it. She tolerates sin under no conceivable circumstances, and provides no antidote against remorse, except what is found in the assurance of God's forgiving mercy. The wretch who has stolen his neighbour's property, or stabbed his neighbour's character, or taken his neighbour's life, she leaves a prey to his own pungent reflections and gloomy forebodings, until he finds a refuge from them in the peace speaking blood of Christ. In short, all her doctrines and precepts are

adapted to pour light into the conscience, and to cause her mandates both to be respected and obeyed.

5. Romanism is adapted to license and invigorate the corrupt propensities of the heart: Protestant Christianity, to restrain and mortify them.

Romanism operates to the accomplishment of this end both *indirectly* and *directly*.

— *Indirectly*, By **keeping** the mind in bondage to ignorance, and keeping the conscience from its appropriate work.

I refer here not so much to the *general* ignorance which this system necessarily produces and perpetuates, as to that which relates more immediately to the great principles of *morality* and *religion*; for though the former certainly has a powerful tendency to foster the evil propensities, as is proved by the history of every barbarous nation, yet it is the latter which originates the highest degree of debasement, and carries forward most rapidly the process of turning man into a brute. Let the sources of moral information be effectually sealed, as they are by the influence of this system; let the people be cut off from all access to the Bible and other books which explain its doctrines and enforce its precepts;—and what better can you expect than that they will become the slaves of mere animal appetite, and that the corrupt propensities will gather strength, just in proportion as the mind is deprived of its appropriate aliment?

But Romanism produces this effect still farther by impairing the sensibility of *conscience*. It is by indulgence that the corrupt inclinations gather strength: of course, whatever has a tendency to remove the obstacles to the indulgence of these inclinations, indirectly ministers to their vigor. Now it requires not a moment's reflection to perceive that one of the most effectual of these obsta-



cles is to be found in an enlightened and active conscience: for let who will make the experiment of perpetrating a wicked act,—unless he has become trained to a habit of desperate depravity, he will find himself chiefly embarrassed by the remonstrances from within; and if these remonstrances are not powerful enough to palsy the hand that is lifted for some presumptuous deed, or bring faintness to the heart that has been brooding over some desperate purpose, yet they at least force the mind to a temporary communion with the future, and establish the doctrine that the way of transgressors is hard. But I have already shown you that this system has a direct tendency to mislead the conscience and diminish its authority: hence it follows that it is fitted to increase the strength and activity of the corrupt inclinations.

But there is not only an indirect but a *direct* influence exerted by Romanism in favour of a habit of sin. What else is implied in the doctrine of indulgences than a direct permission from the church to violate God's commandments for the benefit of the church? What else does the Romish doctrine of absolution imply,—what else is it understood by the great mass of those who hold it, to imply, than that doing penance for the past is the proper preparation for entering on a new course of sin? If it be admitted that the church which inculcates these doctrines is infallible, what better warrant can any sinner need than he here finds, for gratifying his evil propensities to the utmost? If Romanism recognises some doctrines and precepts which forbid the indulgence of the depraved feelings, as she certainly does, is there not in this part of the system to which I have now adverted provision for effectually neutralizing their influence?

Protestant Christianity exerts an opposite influence, by giving light to the understanding and energy to the

conscience; by bringing man in contact with those truths which are adapted to elevate his intellectual nature, and quicken his moral sensibility. She holds up before him continually God's rule of righteousness;—the rule to which his actions are to be conformed, and by which his destiny is to be decided. She shows him that the least violation of this rule is sin; and that the least sin incurs the divine displeasure; and that that displeasure can only be averted by repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. In the doctrine which she inculcates respecting the forgiveness of sin, instead of supplying motives for self-indulgence, she furnishes the most powerful arguments for self-denial; and while she points to the cross of Christ on the one hand, she appeals to every principle of our nature on the other, in aid of a holy life. Indeed the whole system is adapted to bridle, to subdue, and ultimately to exterminate, the corrupt propensities, and to bring in their place those virtues and graces which were never originated or sustained by any mere human influence.

It only remains to contrast these systems,

#### V. IN THEIR EFFECTS ON HUMAN SOCIETY.

I have endeavoured to show you, under the preceding article, what these systems are adapted to accomplish, by referring you to some of their leading constituent principles: in the progress of this division of the discourse, we shall perceive that the actual results of each system have been precisely in accordance with what we have already seen are their legitimate tendencies.

It cannot, I think, fail to occur to you, in contemplating this branch of our subject, that Romanism, in many of its practical bearings, bears a strong resemblance to Mohamedism. There is, however, this difference between the two,—that the former laid the foundation for

the latter. When Mohamed arose, he found the Christian church little better than a mere nursery of superstition and barbarism; and we have already seen to how much account he turned it in the propagation of his imposture. Romanism then is the stock on which Moham-medism is engrafted; but they have risen and grown together for ages; and though, in many respects, they bear a different and even opposite character, yet, in their more general and ultimate results, they are scarcely to be distinguished. I observe

1. That Romanism *has overspread the world with a darkness that could be felt; while Protestant Christianity has arisen upon the world like the sun with healing in his beams.*

I had occasion in the preceding discourse to advert to the almost incredible degree of ignorance and barbarism which prevailed in the Romish church during the middle ages. The luminaries of preceding centuries had now scarcely a name upon the earth; and the dim lights which had come in place of them, hardly emitted a ray beyond the deep recesses of monastic life. Can any fact illustrate this position more strikingly than the well authenticated one, that many of the higher order of ecclesiastics were unable to write their own sermons, and some, even to write their own names? And not only were the dignitaries of the church grossly ignorant, but they were the declared enemies of learning, and even regarded it criminal for men to cultivate their own faculties. Witness the case of Virgil, a Bavarian Bishop of the eighth century, whom Pope Zachary denounced for presuming to teach that the opposite side of the earth is inhabited; saying to his legate, "If he persist in this heresy, strip him of his priesthood; and drive him from the temple and altars of God." Witness too in more

modern times the case of Gallileo, the Astronomer of the seventeenth century, who was well nigh persecuted unto death by the Romish church, for holding the enormous heresy that the earth revolves around the sun. The following is an extract from the sentence of the Inquisition of Rome in 1633, acting under the direction of Pope Urban, in the case of this illustrious man:—"Whereas you, Gallileo, aged seventy years, were denounced for holding as true, a false doctrine taught by many, that the sun is immoveable in the centre of the world, and that the earth moves; therefore this holy tribunal, desirous of providing against the disorder and mischief proceeding and increasing, to the detriment of the holy faith, by the desire of his Holiness, the two propositions are qualified by the theological qualifiers as follows:—1st. The proposition that the sun is the centre of the world, and immoveable from its place, is absurd, philosophically false, and formally heretical; because expressly contrary to the Holy Scriptures. 2d. The proposition that the earth is not the centre of the world, nor immoveable, but that it moves, and has also a diurnal motion, is also absurd, philosophically false, and theologically considered at least erroneous in faith." . . . . "Consequently you have incurred all the censures and penalties appointed and promulgated by the sacred canons, from which it is our pleasure that you should be absolved, provided that you do first with a sincere heart and a true faith, abjure, curse, and detest before us, the aforesaid errors and heresies, and every other error and heresy contrary to the Roman Catholic church, in the form which shall be prescribed to you by us." Accordingly, Gallileo, as the only means of saving his life, actually did renounce, under oath, those sublime philosophical truths which it had been the work of his life to establish, and which have surrounded his name



with a halo of glory. Think of the old philosopher receiving the reward for his noble discoveries, by being cast into a dungeon at the age of seventy, with the horrid alternative of abjuring as false and mischievous what he knew to be great and glorious truths, or else of being broken upon the wheel or burnt at the stake! Do I wrong the church that could be guilty of such an act, when I say that she has been the great patron of barbarism?

Nor has the Romish church been more tolerant toward the records and monuments of learning than toward its promoters and friends. I may instance the conduct of the fanatical Zumaraga, first Bishop of Mexico, who caused all the symbolical writings and monuments of the Mexicans to be destroyed, on the alleged ground that they were diabolical works and savoured of heresy;—also that of Cisneros, an inquisitor of Spain, who committed to the flames eighty thousand volumes of the most valuable works extant in all the departments of science. Look over those countries where the Romish religion now prevails;—look at Spain, Portugal and Italy, and fathom, if you can, the depths of ignorance and barbarism which prevail there! Are the inhabitants, think you, who are able to read, allowed to select their own books? No, not without the most careful attention to the prohibited list;—a list which occupies many folio volumes, and includes such names as Bacon and Locke, Milton and Young, Watts and Cowper, Addison and Johnson, and almost every other illustrious Protestant author in every language. But in respect to much the greater portion of the people this catalogue is quite useless; for they are exempted from the liability to read heretical books by their inability to read any at all. Rely on it, the human mind there is yet in a deep sleep; and the

only hope that it will be brought out of its lethargy is connected with the hope that it will come under the influence of some other religious system.

I need not stop to describe particularly the effects of Protestant Christianity in reference to the great cause of intellectual and social improvement. That man knows nothing of her history, who does not know that wherever she has planted herself, she has kindled up around her the lights of learning and science, and has been hailed as a deliverer from mental darkness and bondage.—Compare, for instance, the intellectual condition of the metropolis of Scotland with that of Spain or Italy; and while in the former you find a magnificent galaxy of great and cultivated minds, and see all of every class and of every age walking, to a greater or less extent, in the light of the sun of science, in the latter you find a mere mass of intellectual debasement;—the multitude effectually shut out from the means of acquiring knowledge, and only here and there an individual who attains to a respectable mediocrity. Or you may take a case which you can estimate the better as it lies nearer home: I refer to the intellectual state of New England and of Lower Canada. These two tracts of country were originally settled at periods not very remote from each other; but the former was settled by Protestants, the latter by Romanists. And now I ask you to judge of the intellectual influence of the two systems, by travelling through these two portions of country, in which they have respectively had their operation. In the one you are surrounded by monuments of intelligence, and every village through which you pass has its provision for forming the minds of the rising generation: in the other you find the human faculties in a great degree torpid from a long habit of inaction; and almost every thing you see

and hear proclaims that you are walking over a field of deep mental degradation. Allowing to other causes their full influence in producing this difference, I insist that it is to be referred chiefly to the fact that two religious systems have prevailed of directly opposite tendencies.

2. Romanism *has opened upon the world the flood-gates of crime*: Protestant Christianity *has done much to restore to the world a pure and scriptural morality*.

I might easily show you by a reference to the history of Romanism, that there is scarcely any species of wickedness, however refined or however gross, but has been unblushingly practised under the sanction of the Romish church. But I shall limit myself on the present occasion to a consideration of two of them,—viz, *Treachery* and *Cruelty*; and even in respect to these I can only sketch the most general outline.

I have already had occasion to remark that the Romish church has decided that there is no faith to be kept with hereticks: precisely that doctrine was established by the council of Constance in 1414; and she has acted upon it in instances almost innumerable. Never was there a more flagrant example of treachery than was exhibited in her treatment of that eminent Reformer, John Huss. Having been summoned to appear before the council of Constance, to answer to the charge of having deserted the church of Rome, he obeyed the summons; though not without having received from the Emperor Sigismund a pledge of his protection till he should return to his own home. His enemies, however, by the most scandalous violation of publick faith, imprisoned him, condemned him as a heretick, and burnt him alive; and that too even when the emperor interposed and pleaded that his royal honour was pledged for his

safety. The same horrible doctrine was practically recognised by Innocent IV. and the council of Lyons, in deposing Frederick II. and absolving his subjects from their oath of allegiance; by Pius V. in performing a similar act in the case of Queen Elizabeth; by Clement VII. in compelling Charles V. in violation of his oath to turn the whole race of the Moors in Spain over to the tortures of the Inquisition; and by Louis XIV. in the unprincipled revocation of the edict of Nantes against the faith of the most solemn treaties,—the consequence of which was that France was deluged with the blood of the Protestants. In these and innumerable other instances the Romish church has not only prostituted her honour, but has most grossly perjured herself, in the person of him whom she has recognised as her Head; and that too, to gratify private resentments, or to sustain a corrupt and cruel hierarchy.

And this leads me to say that *cruelty* is joined to treachery in the whole economy and history of Romanism. No matter what amiable qualities a Romish Bishop may possess, he is bound by his oath to be a persecutor; and if he does not persecute hereticks to the extent of his ability, he is a perjured man. Hear the oath which every Bishop is obliged to take previous to his consecration:—"I swear that hereticks, and schismaticks, and rebels to our Lord, the Lord Pope, or his successors, I will, to the extent of my power, persecute and beat down: So help me God, and the holy gospels of God." Now I venture to say that you may go through the history of the Romish church, and you will find that, whatever may have been the fate of other oaths by which their ecclesiastics have bound themselves, this has generally been kept; at least so far as considerations of policy would warrant.



The lighter kind of persecution which this church has carried on has been by curses and excommunications. As a specimen of this I will quote part of the form which was uttered by the Pope against his manufacturer of alum, for eloping from his alum works, and carrying the chemical secret to England:—"May God the Father curse him! May God the Son curse him! May the Holy Ghost curse him! May the Holy Cross curse him! May the Holy and eternal Virgin Mary curse him! May Saint Michael curse him! May John the Baptist curse him! May Saint Peter, and Saint Paul, and Saint Andrew, and all the Apostles and disciples, curse him! May all the martyrs and confessors curse him! May all the saints from the beginning of time to everlasting curse him! May he be cursed in the house and in the fields! May he be cursed while living and dying! May he be cursed in all the powers of his body within and without! May he be cursed from the crown of his head to the sole of his feet! May Heaven and all the powers therein rise against him to damn him, unless he repent and make satisfaction!"—Such are some of the execrations with which his Holiness thought proper to pursue the man who had run off with the secret of making alum. If the offender could have been caught, how quickly would the dungeon or the rack have been made ready for him!

It had been well if the Romish church had never carried forward her persecutions by means of any other weapons than the tongue and the pen; but you need not be told that what I have already referred to is much the milder part of her agency. She has wielded the sword with most desolating effect. She has exhausted her ingenuity in inventing instruments of torture; and, so far as she could, has laid the very elements under

contribution to help forward her bloody work. Is there an individual who is ready to pronounce this statement too broad or too strong to consist with the simple verity? Then, as a cure for his skepticism, let him read the history of the Waldenses and the Albigenses through a long succession of generations, and see how the blood of those inoffensive and excellent people flowed like a river from under the hand of papal persecution. Let him cast an eye over the plains of Languedoc, or the mountains of Bohemia, or the green fields of Spain, and see them covered with the dying and the dead;—the fearful result of those fanatical and desperate conflicts for which the Romish church is solely responsible. Let him transport himself to Paris amidst the horrors of the Saint Bartholomew massacre; and see how her streets are paved with corpses, and her palaces are deluged with blood, and every breeze that passes over her bears off ten thousand dying groans. Let him in imagination travel through Holland, while her sons are dying by tens of thousands in the massacre occasioned by the Duke of Alva; or through England, while the followers of Wickliffe are having a full cup of vengeance wrung out to them; and I venture to predict that he will be prepared to respond to any statement which I have made, and even to say that the half has not been told him.

I can do no justice to this part of my subject without adverting to the INQUISITION;—the most powerful and the most terrifick engine which any community, whether civil or ecclesiastical, ever wielded. But there are two reasons why I shall attempt nothing beyond a very general view of it. The one is, that the limits which I have prescribed to myself will not allow me to be particular: the other is, that I am sure there is horror enough in the simple outline, to make you more than willing

that I should dispense with the filling up. Lend your attention then to a few facts in relation to this subject, which are confirmed by most authentic and ample testimony.

The Inquisition, as you know, is a tribunal erected by the Popes for the examination and punishment of heretics. It originated in the twelfth century under the patronage of Pope Innocent III. The earliest inquisitor was Dominick; a man whom the Romish church has canonized as a saint, but whom all the world besides has branded as a fiend. This abominable court has been established in several European countries; but no where has it acted with such malignant energy, no where have its dungeons been so much like the vaults of Hell, or the economy of its conductors so much like the economy of devils, as in Spain and Portugal. It has been horrible enough in Italy. It was forced for a time upon France and Germany; but in neither of those countries did it ever gain a permanent footing. Great Britain has uniformly and successfully resisted it. At present the *grand* Inquisition is known only in history; though it is only within a few years that it has been abolished; and there is much reason to believe that this infernal engine is still in operation on a smaller scale in different parts of Continental Europe. Of course it moves now in the deepest silence, conscious that its doings will not bear to be looked at by the light of the nineteenth century; but if it could borrow power from the spirit of the age to extend its dominion, I see no evidence that it would not bring back, in their full extent, the tragical horrors of preceding centuries.

In Spain there were at one time no less than eighteen different Inquisitorial courts; and beside the vast numbers who were immediately connected with them as offi-

cers, there were twenty thousand familiars, or spies, scattered throughout the country, whose business it was to mingle in all companies, and drag all suspected persons to the cells of the Inquisition. Neither youth, nor beauty, nor virtue, nor age, nor the sacredness of domestick relations, furnished the least security against the ruthless hand of these apostles from the pit. No man could lay his head upon his pillow without anxiety; for he could feel no assurance but that, before the light of another day, himself, or his wife, or his child, would receive a summons as awful and as irresistible, as if it had come from the king of terrors. No family could separate for the night, but the appalling conviction must have forced itself upon them that they were not improbably taking of each other a final leave. Fancy, if you can, the horror of the scene, when the prison carriage was heard at the dead of night to stop before the door; and immediately a loud knock was accompanied by the stern command, "Open to the holy Inquisition;" and every inmate of the dwelling felt his blood curdle at the sound; and the head of the family was called upon to give up the mother of his beloved and helpless children; and he dared not even to whisper an objection or let fall a tear; but hastened back to her chamber, and led her out, and put her into the custody of an incarnate demon; and then, as the prison carriage rolled away to the dungeon, oh how that husband was convulsed with agony, as he contemplated her the innocent victim of a long and living death. The movements of these familiars were conducted with such profound secrecy that it was not uncommon for members of the same family to be ignorant of each others' apprehension. One instance is recorded in which a father, three sons and three daughters, all of whom occupied the same house, were separately



seized and thrown into the dungeons of the Inquisition, and knew nothing of each others' fate till after seven years of torture, those of them who survived, met to mingle their death groans at an *auto da fe*. And as the process of apprehension was usually conducted with the utmost silence, so, when the wretched victim was actually apprehended and carried to the dungeon for trial, he was never confronted by his accuser, or even told what was the crime for which he had been arrested; but was left to conjecture the crime, and to accuse himself: and if he did not instantly confess, confession was extorted from him by virtue of the rack.

Shall I conduct you to that abode of horror, that ante-chamber of Hell, in which these deeds of darkness are perpetrated? The very exterior of the building indicates that it was made for some malignant purpose. You enter it by massive doors, and are led on by narrow and winding passages, rendered still more horrible by the dim torch light which pervades them, till you reach the dungeons in which men die by torture. And here is the depository of every thing that human ingenuity has invented to cause a protracted and agonizing death. There is the torture by water; and the torture by fire; and the torture by the pendulum; and the torture by the rack; each one of which, if it were to be described to you, would cause your blood to freeze with horror. When the vaults of the Spanish Inquisition were thrown open by the troops of Napoleon, an image of the Virgin Mary was discovered which, on inspection, was found to be a torturing engine. She wore beneath her robes a metal breastplate, thickly stuck with needles, spikes and lancets. The familiar who was present was requested to work the engine; and he did so. As she raised her arms as if to embrace, a knapsack was thrown into

them; and in closing them upon it, she pierced it through in a hundred places. To the living victim it would have proved instantly the embrace of death.

But the consummation of the tragic scenes of the Inquisition is in the *auto da fe*. On this occasion which always occurs on the Sabbath, and usually in connexion with some great festival, the prisoners are brought forth from their dungeons to have their doom finally decided. Each one knows what his doom is to be by the manner in which he is habited;—those who are absolved as innocent, wearing black coats without sleeves;—those who have narrowly escaped being burnt, having upon their black coats flames painted, with their points turned downwards;—those who are first to be strangled and then burnt, having flames on their habits pointing upwards;—and those who are to be burnt alive, having, besides the flames pointing upwards, their own picture painted on their breasts, surrounded with the pictures of dogs, and serpents and devils. A procession is now formed consisting of the Dominican friars, the prisoners, and after them, the familiars and inquisitors, and moves with the utmost solemnity to a scaffold large enough to accommodate several thousand people. If a prisoner on the way ventures to speak, he does it at the peril of being instantly gagged. On their arrival at the scaffold, there is delivered a miserable declamation called a sermon, made up of the most lofty encomiums of the Holy Inquisition, and of the most bitter invectives against hereticks; after which, a priest recites the final sentence of those who are to suffer death, and delivers them over to the civil magistrate; at the same time begging, with the hypocrisy of an arch fiend, that the secular arm may not touch their blood or put their lives in jeopardy! Being now in the hands of the civil magistrate, they are loaded

with chains, and carried first to the secular jail; thence to the judge to receive their sentence; and thence to the place of execution. But the closing scene I cannot attempt to describe. I will only say that you gain no adequate idea of it by being told that they are burnt at the stake. Pagan Rome burnt Christians; but she never did it with that refinement of torture which completes the horrible tragedy of the Inquisition.

You will readily infer from the statements already made, that the desolation occasioned by the Romish church in different ages is so vast and varied, that it scarcely admits of being accurately estimated. According to the best authorities, however, she has been instrumental of the destruction of a million and a half of Moors in Spain; nearly two millions of Jews in Europe; fifteen millions of Indians in Mexico and South America, including the islands of Cuba and St. Domingo; and about fifty millions of Protestants, in Europe and the East Indies; making in the whole the appalling number of sixty-eight millions and five hundred thousand! Was there not a fearful significance in that part of John's vision which represents her as "the woman in scarlet on the scarlet coloured beast?"

Turn now to those countries in which Protestant Christianity has prevailed, and thus let your mind be relieved from the horrors you have been contemplating. I well know that they are not what the gospel of Christ requires them to be, and that they are chargeable in no small degree, with open and gross immoralities; and the reason of this is to be found chiefly in the fact that men, under the influence of passion and appetite, will not always be restrained from sin even by the force of their own convictions; though we are not to lose sight of another fact—viz, that in no country does Protestant-

ism exist but in connexion with other systems. But while I acknowledge that the Protestant faith has by no means done for the world all that could be desired, I maintain,—and I appeal confidently to facts to justify me in doing so,—that, wherever this system has prevailed, and just in proportion as it has prevailed, it has served to purify and elevate not only individual but national character. Under its influence man has learned to respect the rights of his fellow man; and instead of plunging a dagger into his brother's bosom because he has ventured to think for himself, he has acknowledged his right to do so, and bid him sit unmolested under his own vine and fig tree. And while there belongs to Protestantism a spirit of due toleration in respect to religious opinions, who can deny that its general influence has been on the side of a scriptural morality? Cast your eye over the map of the world, and tell me where the Christian virtues are most eminently displayed; where the spirit of benevolence comes out in the full strength of its benign attractions; where publick opinion most effectually brands the guilty even though he may escape the jail or the gallows:—I ask you, is it not in those countries where the Reformed religion prevails in its greatest purity? Is it not in our own land, and the land of our fathers' sepulchres?

I am aware that the statement which I have made may appear to some to need qualification, on account of certain acknowledged cruelties in which Protestants of former ages have been concerned. I am asked—and it is a question which has been stereotyped for the last two centuries—whether Calvin did not consent to the doom of the unhappy Servetus? I am asked again, whether the garments of Protestant Britain have not been stained with blood? And yet again, whether the Fathers of



New England,—the very men whose memories we cherish most gratefully—did not evince towards some members of the Society of Friends a spirit of bitter persecution? To all these inquiries I unhesitatingly answer, Yes; and pronounce the conduct in each case as utterly at war, not only with the precepts of religion, but with the spirit of humanity. But you cannot reflect a moment without perceiving that, though these were the doings of Protestants, yet the Romish church fairly comes in for a share in the guilt. For who enacted the bloody law under which Servetus suffered? The Romanists. Who enacted the intolerant laws of England which took effect in the wanton murder of many of her worthiest sons? They were enacted indeed by royal authority, but that authority was under the controul of the Romish church. And how came our New England Fathers to evince toward the Quakers a persecuting spirit, when they had themselves just fled before the hand of persecution? It was because the spirit of Romanism lingered after its institutions had passed away: it had so incorporated itself with the character of the age that it was not strange that these great and good men should have been in a measure imbued with it;—nay, it would have been an anomaly in human experience, if it had been otherwise;—if even their own sufferings had altogether purified them from the same spirit by which their sufferings had been inflicted.

I say then, the Romish church is actually responsible, in a great measure, for the persecutions in which Protestants have been engaged. And she still manifests a persecuting spirit as she has opportunity: indeed she is obliged by her very canons to do so; and she cannot repeal one of her cruel edicts, or repent of one of her cruel deeds, but she yields up her infallibility, and with it her

very existence. Protestant Christianity knows no doctrines or precepts which tend to foster this unhallowed spirit; and if a Protestant actually indulges it, he makes war upon all the principles of his own system. There is no branch of the Reformed church now that engages to any considerable extent in persecution; and the bloody scenes of former days are remembered only with reprobation and horror.

I have now finished the contrast which I proposed between Protestant Christianity and Romanism: but I cannot dismiss the subject without asking your attention to two or three remarks which the view we have taken of it obviously suggests.

1. The first is that *Romanism is, in many respects, closely allied to Paganism.*

This remark applies equally to the general constitution and tendencies of the system, and to its more particular ceremonies and doctrines. If Paganism appeals chiefly to the imagination and the senses, and has little to do with the understanding and the heart, who can resist the impression that Romanism partakes in no small degree of the same character? If Paganism is essentially a system of superstition, and recognises idolatry as one of its primary elements, what think you of Romanism, in view of the homage which it enjoins to saints, images and relicks of the dead? If the streets of Pagan Rome were illuminated at night by the burning of the early Christians, the dungeons of Papal Rome have resounded night and day with the groans of later Christians, while the engines of torture have been kept in constant and horrible operation. And to be more particular I may ask, whence was derived the custom ordained by Gregory VII. of kissing the feet of the Pope, but from the Pagans who kissed the feet of their emperors? Whence came

the practice of the priests shaving their heads, and taking the form of a crown, but from the priests of ancient Egypt? On what else are the present nunneries founded, but upon the ruins of the Vestal Virgins? What is the holy water of the Romish church, but an imitation of the lustral water of the Pagans? Whence came the Romish purgatory, and penance, and canonization of saints, and processions, and pilgrimages, but from heathen sources? Indeed I venture to say that there is scarcely a peculiarity of Romanism but had its origin, either directly or indirectly, in Pagan superstition. Some of the Romish churches in Europe were originally heathen temples; and, if I am correctly informed, some of the carved emblems which were used in the Pagan worship, are used at this day in the Romish service.

No fact is better established than that Christianity, at her first introduction, was at war with Paganism; that she would not consent on any ground to hold the least communion with it:—what then are we to think of a system which, under the name of Christianity, bears so much of a Pagan character? I propound it as a serious question to every one who has intelligently and impartially examined this subject, whether the Romish system, as it now exists in the authorized canons of the church, bears a stronger resemblance to the systems of ancient Paganism, or to the system which is inculcated in the New Testament?

2. Another obvious inference from this subject is, that *Romanism is the sworn enemy of Freedom.*

In the Pope she recognises a supreme earthly potentate, in whose hands all power on earth, and I had almost said in Heaven too, is vested. He is styled by Romish writers, “the infallible one;” “another God on earth;” “the Lord our God the Pope;” and Clement

VII. and his cardinals, in their letter to Charles VI. say, "As there is only one God in Heaven, so there cannot and ought not to be, but one God on earth." And in full accordance with these arrogant assumptions, the Pope has claimed, and in numerous instances, exercised, the prerogative of vacating thrones by a word, and thrusting kings into obscurity. He professes to hold the keys of the kingdom of Heaven, and to open the gates to none but those who die in the Holy Catholic church; and hence the bull of Pius V. against the Queen of England was entitled "The Damnation of Queen Elizabeth." Let those be inquired of who have travelled in Papal countries even now, since the arm of Romish power is, in a great degree, withered, and they will testify that they have mingled with an enslaved population; that there is a system of oppression there which reaches not only to the body but to the mind; and that they are convinced, if men bear it patiently, it is either because they dare not rebel, or because they have been so thoroughly trained to a habit of servitude, that there is an utter extinction of all the native lofty tendencies of the soul: And they will tell you that while they have been sojourners in those countries, they have longed to breathe the fresh air of freedom; and that when they came back to their native land, they trod the earth with a freer step, they gazed upon the skies with a sublimer pleasure, the foliage seemed more verdant, and the air more fragrant, and all nature more beautiful, because every thing around them proclaimed that they were in a land of liberty.

You may ask perhaps whether the liberties of this country are likely to be endangered by the influence of Romanism. I answer the question only by repeating what I have already said, that Romanism is essentially and theoretically a system of slavery; and every Ro-



manist on the face of the earth, if he understands his own system, acknowledges a power which may absolve him from every obligation to yield obedience to civil rulers. That the predominance of such a system must be fatal to the liberties of any country, no one can doubt; but whether or not there is danger that this will ever be realized here, I will not take it upon myself to judge.

3. It is impossible to avoid the conclusion that *Romanism puts at fearful hazard man's immortal interests*.

I here assume the fact that it is the true gospel, and that alone, which is the power of God unto salvation; and that whatever obstructs or counteracts its influence, must, in, the same proportion, jeopard the souls of men. But have we not seen that Romanism in various ways actually produces this effect? While therefore I would not intimate a doubt that the Romish church may include many who will be saved, I cannot resist the conviction that they will be saved so as by fire. When I contemplate the great mass of them sunk in ignorance and superstition, scarcely knowing more of the gospel than the inhabitants of Hindoostan, and apparently substituting a round of senseless ceremonies for an intelligent and living faith, much as I may wish to believe that they are in the way to Heaven, I cannot believe it so long as I hold to the Bible. I deplore the condition to which multitudes of them are subjected in the present life; but I contemplate with incomparably deeper anxiety their prospects in reference to the world to come.

There is another view to be taken of this point:—Romanism, as we have seen, has much in it to foster the evil propensities of the heart;—it not only tolerates sin but encourages it; it not only wipes off the guilt of past offences for money, but it secures the privilege of com-

mitting future sins, provided money enough can be furnished to pay for it. But what is it but sin unrepented of by man, and unforgiven by God, which destroys the soul? And what is the doctrine of penance, and the doctrine of absolution, but the merest mockery? Romanism then endangers the soul, as it encourages and fosters that which alone causes the soul's destruction.

Yet another view :—This system tends directly to infidelity. Its doctrines are too gross for a cultivated intellect to digest ; its practices too absurd for reflecting men to adopt. Let the mind become enlightened, and it will not be likely to receive the dogmas of any church without examination : it will require evidence for whatever is proposed as a matter of faith. Just then imagine the condition of an intelligent Romanist who, from his general habits of thought and investigation, directs his attention towards Christianity as it is presented in the canons of his own church : at once its absurdities glare upon him, and his Reason instantly rejects them. But in rejecting them, he gives up the only form of Christianity which perhaps has come under his observation ; and though, from considerations of policy, he may not choose openly to avow his defection from the church, yet he remains in it not as a papist but as an infidel. This was just the experience of Blanco White as related by himself ; and that, notwithstanding he was a Romish priest ; and those who have been familiar with the more intelligent class of Romanists in Europe, have unhesitatingly expressed the opinion that far the greater part of them have no belief in Revelation. Surely then, if Romanism ministers to the cause of infidelity, it puts in jeopardy the souls of men ; for Jesus himself has declared that "he that believeth not shall be damned."

4. Our subject suggests *the proper mode of encountering the Romish religion.*

It is not by burning down their convents, nor by assailing them with abusive epithets, nor by attempting to rob them of any of their legitimate privileges ; but it is by subjecting their system to scriptural and reasonable tests, and diffusing correct information in regard to its tendencies and results. I would be an advocate for their having the same civil rights which I myself enjoy ; and in all the intercourse of life would know nothing else toward them than Christian kindness and courtesy ; but I would not let my kindness and courtesy carry me so far as to lead me virtually to connive at their errors ; while yet I would endeavour to expose them only by means of truth and argument. These are the only weapons with which I would encounter them, save the still mightier weapon of prayer ; and on this last I should chiefly rely, because hereby faith wields the energies of Omnipotence. I know how many obstacles there are in the way of their being approached ; nevertheless I would say, give them light to the extent of your ability, and in proportion as you do this, you are likely to work a cure for their errors. Much has been apprehended from the prevalence of Romanism in our great Western world : And here again, I would say, endeavour to counteract their influence only by the diffusion of light ;—the light of science and learning,—the light of genuine Christianity. Romanism, as we have seen, has its appropriate element in intellectual darkness : if the darkness be continued, it will live ; if it be dissipated, it will die.

You will greatly misapprehend me, my friends, if you imagine that the design of this discourse has been to excite in you any hostility towards that portion of our community, whose religious system I have felt myself called

upon to expose. Such a wish on my part would be every way inconsistent with the benevolence of the gospel. I regard them as proper objects of our compassion and our prayers; and I would exhort you all to administer to their wants with the same open hand as if they had cordially embraced our own faith; for the true spirit of Protestant Christianity will justify nothing else.—When you remember that they were born in the Romish church, that, by the circumstances of their education, they have been shut out from the light of truth almost as much as if their lot had been cast in a Pagan land, that all the strength and sacredness of early associations are in favour of the system which they hold, and that they have been steadily trained to the belief that there is no salvation out of the Romish communion;—can you wonder at their bigoted adherence to their own doctrines? Had you and I been born and educated in similar circumstances, is there not every reason to believe that we should have been like them? Instead, therefore, of reproaching them with their errors, or irritating them by severe denunciations, let us endeavour, in all respects, to do them good as we have opportunity; not forgetting to propound to our own consciences the question, “Who hath made thee to differ?”

5. *Let not Christianity be held responsible for the lives of her professors.*

Who that has been conversant with the objections of infidels against our blessed Religion, does not know with how much triumph they have appealed to the history of Christianity for evidence that it does not make men the better; and after having drawn a picture,—if you please, a faithful picture,—of the Christian church during much the larger part of the period of her past existence;—after having exhibited the various forms of ignorance and su-



perstition, of debasement and crime, with which she is justly chargeable, they have looked at the result of their efforts with the most self-complacent exultation, as if the Bible were fairly proved to be nothing better than a book of fables. But if they will turn off their eyes from the history of the church, and let them rest awhile on this very Bible which they condemn, they will see that the precepts and doctrines of the latter are utterly at war with the offensive dogmas and practices of the former; and that it is the height of injustice to Christianity to attempt to identify them. We admit that age after age passed away, and the church was not only overspread with thick darkness, but was the scene of abominations upon which the imagination scarcely dares to linger; but during that whole period the Christian Religion, as it existed in the Bible, and as it existed in the hearts and lives of the faithful, had in it the elements of grace, and purity and wisdom; and so far as its voice could be heard, protested against the absurdities and enormities which were prevailing under the sanction of the Christian name. I say then, the infidel is flagrantly unjust in charging these evils to the account of Christianity: she is not responsible for them in any other way than as a good man is responsible for another's crime, against which he had most solemnly and earnestly remonstrated.

And the spirit to which I have here adverted is not confined to professed infidels; nor is it brought into exercise merely by contemplating the history of the Romish church. There has always been much—there is much at this day—in the Protestant church, and that whether you view things on a more extended or a more limited scale, which is at war both with the precepts and spirit of true Christianity. Not only individual professors of religion prove themselves gross hypocrites by shamelessly

violating the principles of the gospel, while yet they make high pretensions to living under its power, but practices sometimes creep into the church and become extensively prevalent, which will not bear for a moment to be referred to the scriptural standard. Do you who are men of the world ask me where you shall look for an illustration of Christianity but to the lives of its professors? I will tell you:—look at the character of its glorious Founder;—look into the record of his life, and of his Religion as he has given it to the world;—and see if there be any thing there which your judgment does not fully approve. Or if you *must* look at its professors, be candid enough to contemplate the characters of those who in some good degree walk in the steps of Him whom they acknowledge as their Lord. I repeat, Christianity in the Bible is one thing, Christianity in the church has too often been quite another; and if, in the spirit of a caviller, you identify the two, take heed lest you do it at the peril of your soul.

5. *Let the church be admonished in respect to the danger of an ever restless spirit of innovation.*

In contemplating the history of Romanism we have seen that it had a small beginning: it originated in the slightest defection from apostolick faith and practice; and for a time there seems to have been no intention to depart materially from the scriptural standard; but the waves of innovation rose higher, and became stronger, and succeeded each other with increasing rapidity, until the glorious truths and institutions of the gospel were well nigh submerged in a common ruin. Behold Christianity as she was in the apostolick age, and then view her as she was in the tenth and eleventh centuries; and in the process by which this change has been effected you have a fair illustration of the gradual and insidious

and disastrous manner, in which an innovating spirit operates.

Now then let not the church, or any portion of the church, shut her ears upon the lessons of the past. The absurdities and errors which we have been contemplating are so many beacons to warn us against a departure from the simplicity that is in Christ. In respect both to the doctrines and institutions of the gospel, there is a monitory voice from the past, saying "Touch them not;" and if we refuse to obey this mandate, we not only turn a deaf ear to the language of Providence, but trifle with the authority of Zion's King. Do you say, "Let me modify God's truth or God's ordinances a little, that I may accommodate the one or the other more to the circumstances of the times?" How do you know but that, in doing so, you may be laying a foundation on which there shall arise a superstructure of impiety or infidelity that shall tower into the clouds as a beacon to coming generations? How do you know but that those who come after you will have occasion to point to what you are doing, as the lifting up of the floodgates of desolating fanaticism or fatal error? How do you know but that He who hath sent his angel to testify to the churches, may punish your rash invasion of his authority, by taking away your part out of the Book of Life and out of the Holy City?

## LECTURE VI.

### EVANGELICAL CHRISTIANITY CONTRASTED WITH UNITARIANISM.

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#### I. TIMOTHY III. 16.

*God was manifest in the flesh.*

IN CONNEXION WITH

#### II. PETER II. 1.

*Denying the Lord that bought them.*

Paul, in the former of these passages, brings out in the most unequivocal manner the doctrines of the deity and incarnation of Jesus Christ;—doctrines which may fairly be considered as constituting the basis of the whole system of evangelical truth. Peter, in the latter passage, is warning the Christians to whom he writes against the influence of certain false teachers whom he describes as “bringing in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them,” or rejecting the great doctrine of Redemption through the blood of Christ. The two passages taken together, therefore, may fairly be considered as suggesting *the contrast between Evangelical Christianity and Unitarianism*;—the subject which, in this course of lectures, next claims our attention.



By *Evangelical Christianity* you will understand me to mean that system, the leading doctrines of which are, the depravity of human nature, the deity and atonement of Jesus Christ, justification by faith in the merits of his blood, and the necessity of the Holy Spirit's influence to regenerate and sanctify the heart. There are other doctrines in respect to which Christians who, in the main, may be considered evangelical, differ; but the rejection of either of those just mentioned is a virtual rejection of the system to which it belongs.

By *Unitarianism* I mean that system which, in its leading features, is directly the opposite of the one just referred to;—which maintains that the moral nature of man has sustained no shock by the original apostacy, but retains all its primeval purity; that Jesus Christ is a mere man, or at most only a superangelical being; that his death was chiefly that of a martyr, not that of an atoning Saviour; that we are justified by our own personal righteousness, not by the righteousness of the Lord Jesus; and that we are not dependant on any special divine influence for a spiritual renovation. I am aware that among those who have called themselves Unitarians there have been some who have professed, in some sense, to receive the doctrine of atonement; but while I would cheerfully concede to such whatever of truth they really hold, without even stopping to inquire at present in respect to its consistency with other parts of their system, I cannot forbear to remark that, so far as my observation has extended, they have generally attached but little importance to the doctrine, and have by no means considered the rejection of it as implying even a very serious defect in Christian character. If I do not greatly mistake, the class of Unitarians who embrace this doctrine in any sense, at this day, is small;—so

small as *not* to demand any distinct consideration in this discourse. The same remark may apply to some other of the evangelical doctrines : some Unitarians have claimed, and for aught I know, still claim, to hold them in a modified form ; but the number is too inconsiderable to constitute any ground for a formal exception.

It may not improbably strike some minds that both the terms by which I have chosen to designate these systems are objectionable. It may be said on the one hand that the very term *Evangelical Christianity* seems to take for granted that the system to which it is applied is the true system ; in other words, that which is taught in the New Testament ; and on the other hand that, in according to the opposite system the name *Unitarianism*, we seem virtually to acknowledge ourselves *Tritheists* ; as if *we* were not also believers in one only living and true God. But I cannot conceive that in either case the objection is valid. In appropriating the term *Evangelical Christianity*, we only mean to designate the system which we firmly believe the gospel contains : in conceding the use of the term *Unitarianism*, we only allow to men their own way of expressing their belief that God exists in one person only, in opposition to ours that he exists in three. I would not say that names are of no importance ; or that they are not sometimes worth contending for ; but in the present case I can perceive no unfairness in claiming the one, no unworthy concession in yielding the other.

With this general explanation of the two systems, we will proceed to contrast them in respect to

# I. THEIR ACCORDANCE WITH THE OBVIOUS INTERPRETATION OF THE BIBLE :

II. THE HOMAGE WHICH THEY PAY TO THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE :

III. THE NUMBER AND IMPORTANCE OF THEIR PECULIAR DOCTRINES :

IV. THEIR ADAPTATION TO PACIFY A GUILTY CONSCIENCE :

V. THEIR TENDENCY TO PRODUCE AND CHERISH THE CHRISTIAN VIRTUES.

I. In respect to THEIR ACCORDANCE WITH THE OBVIOUS INTERPRETATION OF THE BIBLE.

1. I refer, first, to the doctrines which the two systems inculcate concerning *the person and character of Jesus Christ*. Unitarianism maintains that he is a mere creature ; possessing either a superangelical nature or simple humanity. Evangelical Christianity maintains that he is truly and properly God, and truly and properly man ; and that, in this double nature, he sustains the mediatorial office. Our inquiry is, which of these two doctrines is most in agreement with the obvious interpretation of Scripture.

It must have occurred to every reflecting reader of the Bible that the person and character of Christ are described by three different classes of passages, each of which differs materially from the others. That we may the more easily test the doctrines under consideration, I will select a few passages belonging to each class.

Of the first class I mention the following :

“ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.” “ And thou Lord, in the beginning, hast laid the foundation of the earth ; and the heavens are

the works of thy hands : they shall perish, but thou remainest ; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment ; and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up and they shall be changed : but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail." " Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all God blessed forever." " And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we may know Him that is true ; and we are in Him that is true even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life." " And Jesus seeing their faith, said unto the sick of the palsy, son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee." " And I give unto them eternal life." " For as the Father raiseth up the dead and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom he will." " For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." " Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." " I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord ; which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty." " And all the churches shall know that I am He, which searcheth the reins and hearts ; and I will give unto every one of you according to his works." " Every creature which is in Heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, honour, glory and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever." " And they stoned Stephen invoking (as the literal translation is,) and saying, Lord Jesus receive my spirit !"



Of the second class of passages the following are a specimen :—

— “ But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men : and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” “ Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same.” “ He took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham.” “ Wherefore, in all things, it behooved him to be made like to his brethren.”

Of the third class it may suffice to mention the following :—

“ And Jesus came and spake unto them saying, All power is given unto me in Heaven and in earth.” “ For as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man.” “ Then cometh the end when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority and power. For he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet.” “ According to the working of his mighty power which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come, and hath put all things under his feet; and gave him to be the Head over all things to the Church, which is his body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all.” “ Being made so much better than the angels as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excel-

lent name than they." "Who is gone into Heaven, and is on the right hand of God ; angels, and authorities and powers being made subject unto him."

Such is a specimen of all that the Bible contains in respect to the person and character of the Lord Jesus Christ. The passages which I have quoted, constitute, indeed, but a small portion of what has been revealed on this subject ; but they may fairly be considered as a specimen of the whole ; and I may safely say there is no passage but admits of being easily and naturally referred to some one of these classes. By this exhibition of scripture testimony, let us now test the doctrines under consideration.

How will the Unitarian doctrine that Jesus Christ is *a mere man*, who had no existence till he was born of the Virgin Mary, stand this test ?

It behooves the advocates of this theory to show its consistency with the whole of the first class of passages that have been quoted, to say nothing of several of the last ; and whether this is an easy matter a moment's reflection will enable you to judge.

You believe in the simple humanity of Jesus Christ, and you profess to find this doctrine in the Bible. But in the Bible, as we have seen, he is called God, again and again, and in the most unqualified terms : He is represented as "over all God blessed forever ;" as "the true God and eternal life ;" as "the Almighty ;" as having "laid the foundation of the earth ;" as saying to the sick of the palsy, "thy sins be forgiven thee ;" as dispensing "eternal life ;" as "quickening whom he will ;" as occupying the "judgment seat" at the last day ; as being present "where two or three are gathered together in his name ;" as "searching the reins and the hearts," and as receiving the homage of "every creature." Now,

in order to establish your doctrine from the Bible, you have to reconcile it with all these singular declarations; in other words, to show that when the Scripture declares Jesus Christ to be God without the least qualification, when it ascribes to him the perfections, the works, the worship, which belong to God only, it means after all that he is a mere man, possessing no higher nature than that which belongs to every human being.

If this is a difficult task, let us see whether it is a less difficult one to deduce from the Scripture the doctrine held by another class of Unitarians,—that Jesus Christ is *a superangelical being*—something more than man and something less than God.

Upon this supposition you have to encounter the same difficulty in respect to the first class of passages with those who maintain the simple humanity of Christ; for, though your theory exalts him above humanity, and even places him at the head of the creation, yet between him and the Supreme God it leaves the whole distance between finite and infinite: of course not one of those passages which represent him as God can be legitimately applied to the support of your doctrine. But you are equally opposed by the second class of passages,—those which represent him as truly and properly a man; for your scheme denies alike his deity and his humanity. If you will have it that he is not a man, you must show why inspiration in various instances has called him so; has ascribed to him all the attributes of a man, has represented him as having been born, as having lived, and laboured, and suffered, and died, like a man. Both these classes of passages then in their obvious meaning, seem to be opposed to your doctrine; and before you can even neutralize their testimony in favour of an opposite doctrine, you must subject them to the torture.

Now let us bring to the same test the evangelical doctrine ;—viz, that Jesus Christ is *truly and properly God, and truly and properly man* ; and that he sustains an *official character as Mediator* in which he is subordinate to the Father.

This doctrine, you at once perceive, harmonizes the whole Scripture. Is Jesus Christ represented in the first class of passages which have been quoted as possessing a divine nature ? This doctrine acknowledges him as God, in the fullest sense. Is he represented in the second class of passages as possessed of human nature ? This doctrine recognises him as truly and properly a man. Is he represented in the third class of passages as subordinate to the Father, and acting by authority received from him ? This doctrine attributes to him a mediatorial character, in which his subordination to the Father is acknowledged. In short, there is not a passage in Scripture relating to the person or character of Christ, which is not susceptible of being easily harmonized with this scheme ; while, upon either of the Unitarian theories, there is a large portion of Scripture, which, upon any just principles of interpretation, is, to say the least, quite inexplicable.

2. Let the same test be applied to the doctrines which Unitarianism and Evangelical Christianity respectively inculcate in regard to *the design of the death of Christ*: the former regarding his death merely as an example of pious submission, or as a seal to the truth of his testimony ; the latter, chiefly as a propitiatory sacrifice for the sins of men.

All that is held by Unitarians in respect to the design of Christ's death, viz. that he died to teach his followers how to die, and to enable him to authenticate his divine mission by rising from the dead, Evangelical Christians



also admit : the only point of difference between them is, whether, in addition to these ends, there was yet a higher end accomplished by his death,—the purchase of man's redemption. Hear what the Scripture saith on this subject, and then judge.

The prophet Isaiah, ages before the advent of Christ, recorded the following description of the design of his sufferings :—" He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities ; the chastisement of our peace was upon him ; and with his stripes we are healed. The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all ; for the transgression of my people was he stricken. By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many : When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin : For he shall bear their iniquities. And he bare the sin of many." In full accordance with this prophetic testimony, is the language of the Saviour himself, and of the various writers of the New Testament. " Even the Son of man," saith Christ, " came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." And again, in the institution of the ordinance of the Supper, he says in reference to the cup,—“ This is my blood of the New Testament which is shed for many for the remission of sins.” And then if we turn to the record of the Apostles, we find them saying, “ Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.” “ In whom we have redemption through his blood.” “ Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree ; that we being dead to sin should live unto righteousness : by whose stripes ye were healed.” “ When he had by himself purged our sins.”—“ Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood.” “ Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his

own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God"—

I ask now, whether the Evangelical or Unitarian doctrine in respect to Christ's death, seems to you to be taught in these passages? If it were the design of inspiration to teach that no higher ends were accomplished by the death of Christ than are recognised by the Unitarian scheme, I submit it to you whether it is not passing strange that such expressions should have been used as those which I have just recited. On the contrary, if God had designed to reveal to us the doctrine that the death of Christ was a propitiatory sacrifice,—the ground of our pardon, the price of our redemption,—can you conceive of any language which could have been more appropriate or more explicit than that which the inspired writers have actually employed?

I might mention also that the whole sacrificial economy as it is exhibited in the Old Testament becomes strangely unaccountable on the supposition that the sufferings of Christ were not of a vicarious nature; while its fitness and significance are at once manifest, if we connect with his death the idea of an atonement. Is it not strange that the slaying of animals in sacrifice should ever have been prescribed by divine authority, if it had not been designed to prefigure the death of Christ? And would even the death of Christ have imparted any great significance to such an institution, or have probably laid the foundation for its existence, if it had contemplated no higher end than the sealing of his testimony with his blood? But if, on the contrary, Christ died to make reconciliation for the sins of the people,—to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, the whole system of sacrifices gathers an unspeakable interest; it becomes typical of the grandest event which the universe ever witnessed;

a mighty link in that chain of dispensations which is to terminate in the redemption of the world. I repeat then, on the principles of Unitarianism, the sacrificial system, as it existed under the ancient dispensation, was an enigma which has never yet been explained; and I may add, the noble argument on this subject which constitutes the substance of the Epistle to the Hebrews, has neither force nor meaning: on the principles of Evangelical Christianity, it becomes level to the comprehension of a child, while yet, in its connexions and bearings, it is worthy to occupy the intellect of an angel.

I proceed to the next point of contrast between the two systems,—viz.

## II. THE HOMAGE WHICH THEY RESPECTIVELY RENDER TO THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE.

1. Unitarianism asserts that a part only of the Bible is given by inspiration: Evangelical Christianity attributes inspiration to the whole.

I am aware that those who hold the Unitarian system are not exactly agreed as to what portions of the Bible the high attribute of inspiration shall be ascribed, though I believe the exceptions, where particular exceptions are made, will generally be found to respect those parts which are usually regarded as the main pillars of the Evangelical system; and which of course it is most needful to dispose of in order to sustain the claims of the opposite system. Most Unitarians, if I mistake not, discard, either formally or virtually, much the greater part of the Old Testament. Hence a late popular writer says, "The rejection of the Old Testament will relieve many from perplexing doubts relative to the divine attributes, which have appeared to them so contradictory and uncertain; while others will be reclaimed from skepticism who have been made to think that there is the same

authority for believing in the Old Testament as in the New. By rejecting those parts of the former which are so unsuitable and discordant to the spirit of the gospel, with all those degrading and unworthy representations of the high and lofty One who inhabiteth eternity, it will brighten and make clear the path which has so long been encumbered with thorns." Some Unitarians, though they may allow the doctrinal and devotional parts of Scripture to be given by inspiration, deny this in respect to the historical parts:—Thus a writer in the *Monthly Repository* says, "The historical books of Scripture are to be considered merely as human testimony, and as depending for the whole of their authority on the high credibility which we justly ascribe to them from the approved sanctity and veracity of the writers." In favour of this opinion are urged "the contradictions which not unfrequently occur." Some maintain that while the Apostles were inspired in respect to the *doctrines* which they delivered, yet, in their reasonings in support of those doctrines, they are to be regarded as fallible. In accordance with this statement Doctor Ware says, "We must distinguish between the doctrines delivered by the Apostles and primitive teachers, and the arguments, illustrations and topicks of persuasion, which they employed to enforce them. The former we are to consider as given them by inspiration: the latter were the suggestions of their own minds, in the exercise of their respective talents, and the kinds and degrees of knowledge they possessed." Not only the record of particular facts, but considerable portions of books, and even entire books, are rejected by leading Unitarian writers as having no claim to inspiration. Thus Wakefield says, "I believe no more than Thomas Paine, that the sun and moon, either in the apparent or philosophical acceptance of the



phrase, actually stood still at the command of Joshua." In speaking of those portions of the evangelical history which record the miraculous conception of Jesus, the editors of the Improved Version of the New Testament say, "This account was probably the fiction of some early Gentile convert, who hoped, by elevating the dignity of his founder, to abate popular prejudice against his sect." Le Clerc says in his work on inspiration, "There is no proof that what is contained in the Proverbs was inspired to Solomon. There are many of them that are but vulgar Proverbs." And in respect to the Book of Job he adds, that "there was no inspiration in this book more than in the three foregoing." A writer in the *Christian Examiner*, one of the most able and popular of the Unitarian periodicals, speaking of the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, says, "His reasoning cannot be regarded as of any force by any intelligent reader of the present day. It is difficult so far to accommodate our minds to the conceptions and principles of the author and his contemporaries, as to perceive how it was adapted to produce any effect at the time when it was written." Such are the opinions which have been expressed on this subject by Unitarian writers of high respectability; and though each writer is to be understood as stating his own views rather than giving the creed of his denomination, yet I am not aware, nor have I reason to believe, that there is any thing included in the preceding statements from which the Unitarians as a body would be disposed to dissent.

In opposition to this view of Scripture, Evangelical Christianity maintains that all the books which the Protestant church has usually regarded as inspired are really so; that the Old Testament is given by inspiration as truly as the New; and every part of each book

as truly as any part. And in support of this position she alleges that the Scripture itself is entirely silent in respect to any distinction between its different parts; or rather it positively asserts the inspiration of the whole. She alleges farther that the opposite theory represents our Lord and his Apostles as having testified without any limitation or exception to the divine authority of certain books in the Old Testament, when parts of those books, and in some instances much the larger parts, were mere human compositions. If it be true that there is in the Bible this mixing up of divine and human wisdom, who will take it upon himself to separate the chaff from the wheat;—to decide where the writers have spoken from the inspiration of the Almighty, and where from the dictates of their own feeble and fallible understandings? If we refer this question for decision to Unitarians themselves, they have no fixed standard by which to judge in respect to it; other than that nothing can be admitted as of divine authority which militates against the doctrines of their own system. The truth is, that this view of the inspiration of Scripture is scarcely at all to be preferred to a denial of it altogether; for, even admitting that it were possible for a highly cultivated intellect accurately to discriminate between the precious and the vile, yet all must admit that the great mass of people are utterly incompetent to this: and yet the Bible is equally designed for all; and all are alike interested in knowing what portions of it are to be taken as dictated by a God of truth and wisdom. I say then unhesitatingly, if this notion of inspiration be true, I cannot see why the Bible should be regarded as a gift of any great value to the world; for if it contains some things that are from above, they are so blended with other things that are from beneath, that no one can be

assured that, after having done his utmost to discriminate between them, he may not fall into the most dangerous, not to say fatal, errors.

2. Unitarianism *attributes to the writers of the Scriptures a low degree of inspiration where it admits it at all*: Evangelical Christianity *ascribes to them a plenary inspiration*.

It is not easy, I acknowledge, to determine exactly in what sense Unitarians admit the inspiration of the Bible in any case; but if the testimony of some of their standard writers is to be taken, we must conclude that it can be in no very high sense. Most of them speak on this subject with a degree of laxness which shows that their views are extremely indefinite, and which is adapted to lead to any other result than a settled conviction of the divine authority of the Scriptures; while some have hazarded assertions which unequivocally place the Bible on no better footing, as it respects inspiration, than any other book. Agreeably to this statement, Doctor Priestley writes thus:—"The Scriptures were written without any particular inspiration, by men who wrote according to the best of their knowledge, and who, from circumstances, could not be mistaken with respect to the greater facts of which they were proper witnesses; but (like other men subject to prejudice) might be liable to adopt a hasty and ill-grounded opinion concerning things which did not fall within the compass of their own knowledge." And again,—“Neither I, nor, I presume, yourself, believe implicitly every thing that is advanced by any writer in the Old or New Testament.” And Mr. Belsham thus:—"The Scriptures contain a very faithful and credible account of the scripture doctrine, which is the true word of God; but they are not themselves the word of God;

nor do they ever assume that title ; and it is highly improper to speak of them as such ; as it leads inattentive readers to suppose that they are written under a plenary inspiration, to which they make no pretensions." The following is from a writer in the *Christian Examiner* :— "These books, it is true (the canonical books of the New Testament,) are not a revelation. They are nothing more than the best records which remain to us of the Revelation which God made by Jesus Christ.— This Revelation—it is a truth which we wish more widely and better understood—is not to be identified with the canonical books of the New Testament. Let us suppose a philosopher of a mind as enlarged as that of Cicero, and of as high and pure moral sentiments, to have become convinced, during the apostolick age, that Christ was a messenger from God, and to have carefully collected and committed to writing all the information which could then be procured concerning his character, miracles and doctrines, and to have subjoined his own explanations and remarks. Let us, at the same time, suppose him neither called to be an Apostle, nor having his mind miraculously illuminated, but left by God to the exercise of those natural powers which he had originally bestowed upon him. The work of such a writer would, as far as we can judge, have been at least of equal value with any book which remains to us ; though it must have been altogether different from any book of the New Testament." Need I say that between such opinions as these, and those which have been held on the same subject by sober Deists, there is no difference that is entitled to consideration ?

I do not say that there is an entire harmony of opinion in respect to every thing comprehended under the general subject of the inspiration of Scripture among



Evangelical Christians: nevertheless they agree, so far as my knowledge extends, in attributing to the sacred writers all the inspiration that was necessary to preserve them from all error, to guide them into all truth, and to enable them to convey their ideas in a manner best adapted to the purposes of a divine revelation. They do not suppose that inspiration superseded the ordinary and legitimate use of the faculties; but that, under the supernatural guidance and teachings of the Holy Spirit, the faculties performed their office in such a way as to secure to the world a faithful record of God's will, just as truly as if God himself had written it down without the intervention of any human agency. This view of inspiration, you will readily perceive, is adapted to produce an entire confidence in the Bible; for if I believe that all which it contains has been revealed by the Spirit of all Wisdom, and recorded under the supervision and guidance of the same infallible Power, can I resist the conviction that every thing that I find in it is certainly true? Can I entertain a doubt in respect to my obligation to believe its doctrines and obey its precepts, without exception and without hesitation? The Unitarian theory in respect to this subject would seem to excuse me from giving my assent to much that I find in the Bible; and would at least suggest an apology for any doubts I might have in regard to its general authenticity; but *our* view of inspiration *binds* me to believe,—*binds* me to obey; and I cannot refuse to do either, but at the expense of making God a liar on the one hand, or a hard master on the other.

3. In accordance with the preceding views, Unitarianism *appeals to Reason as the ultimate standard of truth*; Evangelical Christianity, *to the Bible*.

You cannot, I think, have been conversant with the writings of Unitarians without having been struck with the fact that their grand objections to the Evangelical doctrines are built, not so much on a supposed contrariety to Scripture as to Reason. Wherefore, for instance, do they object to the doctrine of the complex nature of Jesus Christ, or the doctrine of the Trinity? Because they cannot conceive how the divine and human natures can be united in one person; or how three persons can be united in one God. On what ground do they reject the doctrine of atonement? On the ground that it seems to them a reflection upon the character of God to suppose that he could not forgive sin without some satisfaction to his offended justice. I do not say that they let the Scriptures entirely alone in their attempts to disprove the Evangelical doctrines; but I confess it has appeared to me that the manner in which they approach them betrays a conviction that they are about to examine a witness which would never have been called up but at the instance of the adverse party; and that what they have to do, is, not so much to obtain a positive testimony in their favour, as to neutralize, if possible, the testimony which is rendered against them. I cannot suppose it possible that any person of intelligence and candour ever sat down to the study of the Bible with a determination to find out for himself what it contains, and then to make no appeal from its decisions, who, as a consequence of such an examination, embraced a system which recognises the mere humanity, and rejects the atonement, of the Lord Jesus Christ. Every thing proves that they who arrive at such a result, come to it by a different way: they decide beforehand what is, and what is not, consistent for God to reveal; and then dispose of the scripture testimony as well as they can.

I hardly need tell you that Evangelical Christianity, having settled the question of the divine authority of the Scriptures, regards their decision on every point as ultimate. She asks no better reason for believing any doctrine than that she finds it revealed in the Bible; and though it may involve things too sublime for the human faculties to reach, or too deep for them to fathom, she pauses not a moment to decide whether she shall receive it. Read any of the standard evangelical writers on Theology, and you can hardly fail to be impressed by the fact that the main proofs of the doctrines which they inculcate are drawn from the Bible; that they usually apply the Scriptures in their most obvious and familiar sense; and that, after having proved their divine inspiration, the only province they assign to Reason, is to ascertain their legitimate meaning. In this case you perceive Reason simply determines what God hath said, while faith receives it with simplicity and humility; whereas, in the former case, Reason pre-determines what God ought to say, and unbelief rejects whatever is found to be inconsistent with this pre-determination.

Our next point of contrast between these systems respects,

### III. THE NUMBER AND IMPORTANCE OF THEIR PECULIAR DOCTRINES.

Christianity claims to be, in the most important sense, a distinct system. I do not say that it claims to be in *all* respects distinct from Natural Religion; for the leading truths of Natural Religion, especially those which relate to the existence and character of God, it takes for granted; otherwise there could be no proof of its truth or divinity. Nor do I mean to divorce Christianity from that system which was inculcated under the Jewish dispen-

sation ; but rather to consider the latter as included in the former ; both having in view the same great end, and both being sustained by the same divine authority. What I intend is, that the Religion of the Bible in its largest sense claims a distinctive character : it professes to be infinitely unlike, infinitely above, every other system ; as well in the happiness which it secures to man, as in the glory which it brings to God.

If this claim which Christianity makes as a distinct system can be sustained, (and if it cannot, it must surely relinquish all pretensions to a divine origin,) we naturally expect to find that it has some great and glorious peculiarities ;—that its leading doctrines are altogether beyond the reach of unassisted Reason. Now I undertake to say that, if genuine Christianity be found in the Unitarian system, this expectation is not met : if it be found in the Evangelical system, it is met in a manner the most satisfactory. Let us glance for a moment at the two systems, and see whether this is a rash or unwarrantable conclusion.

You will not understand me as saying that there is *nothing* in Unitarianism to distinguish it from Natural Religion. I am well aware that it admits in some general sense the divine mission of Jesus Christ ; that it recognises the fact of his resurrection from the dead, and his ascension to Heaven, and perhaps his intercession for his followers. But beyond this I am not aware that Unitarianism pretends to any distinctive character. It does indeed include other doctrines ; but they belong to it in common with another system which openly denies the authority of the Bible. It admits, for instance, that man is an imperfect,—if you please, a sinful being : so also does Deism. It maintains that it is the duty of man to worship and obey God, and do good to his fellow man :



so also does Deism. It recognises the truth that God has some general superintendence of the works of his hands: so also does Deism. And finally it asserts that God is merciful, and will pardon sin upon repentance, irrespective of an atonement: in this respect also it entirely harmonizes with Deism. Now I maintain that, except so far as Unitarianism is a system of mere negations, these latter doctrines are all that it regards as fundamental; or if there are others, they resolve themselves at once into the principles of Natural Religion. Hence, if I mistake not, you will find that no small part of the preaching of Unitarians would be entirely acceptable to a sober Deist. So also their prayers are sometimes framed in such a manner as not even to recognise the existence of Christianity; and are such as might have been consistently offered by man in his unfallen state;—I had almost said, by a pure angel at the foot of the throne.

It may perhaps occur to some that I have allowed to Unitarianism too little that is peculiar to Christianity, inasmuch as I have not considered as part of the system the doctrines of a resurrection and final judgment in the sense in which they are generally held by Evangelical Christians. I vindicate myself from any unfairness here, by reading to you one or two brief extracts from Unitarian publications of high authority. One of the most distinguished champions of Unitarianism in this country holds the following language:—"The resurrection which Paul preached had no concern with the flesh and blood that compose the body while we live. And it will probably be found that our Lord himself, although in speaking either to the Pharisees, who held to the resurrection of the body,—a doctrine which was taught by Zoroaster to the Chaldeans, and had been brought from Chaldea by the Jews, on their return from

their captivity,—or to the Sadducees who denied that doctrine, he sometimes appears to accommodate his language to the previously existing opinions of the age,—never yet taught the resurrection of the body as a doctrine of his own; but that, on the contrary, when speaking as he often spoke, of the resurrection of the dead, he meant the survivorship of the spirit.” Again, in the *Christian Examiner* it is thus written:—“I do not believe there ever will be any general judgment. The assembled universe, so often spoken of, as gathered at once before the throne of God, to be reciprocally spectators of each others’ trial and judgment, is, I believe, a mere coinage of the human brain. Certainly the Scriptures assert no such thing.” “The last day therefore spoken of in the Scriptures, we conceive to be the last day of each individual’s mortal life.” And thus in the *Unitarian Advocate*:—“We are told that Christ will judge the world.” “We are not to presume, however, that he will do it in person; but only that the world will be judged by the principles which he has set forth in the gospel.” I do not say that all Unitarians would concur in these views; but I take for granted the mass of them do, from finding them thus explicitly stated in some of their standard publications; and in view of these statements I leave you to define, as well as you can, the boundary between Unitarianism and Deism.

But while Unitarianism differs from Deism in only a few points, and those comparatively unimportant, Evangelical Christianity is altogether another system. If we are asked to state its peculiarities in a single word, we say that they consist in the doctrine of the sinner’s justification by faith in the atonement of a divine Saviour, and in the doctrine of the sinner’s regeneration and sanctification by the influence of the Holy Spirit. In

these two great truths considered in their legitimate connexions and bearings, is bound up the whole Evangelical system; and who does not perceive at once that they constitute it essentially different from any other system? Hence you find that these doctrines give a distinct complexion to the preaching, the writings, the prayers, the conversation, of those who embrace them. If a minister is truly evangelical in his views, you cannot listen to his sermons, and especially to his prayers, but you will see at once that they constantly recognise principles which every Deist rejects; and these are the very principles which distinguish the Evangelical system from Unitarianism. Ask the most illiterate Evangelical Christian for his views of Christianity, and he will tell you in his own way, of the deep and desperate depravity of the human heart as laying a foundation for the necessity of a divine interposition; of the atoning death of the Lord Jesus Christ as adapted to meet the mighty exigency in man's condition; of justification by the righteousness of Christ and sanctification by his Spirit, and of all the blessings of a complete redemption, as the result of his mediatorial work. It is manifest that between his creed and the creed of the Deist there is a great gulf fixed; that the one could never be mistaken for the other any more than darkness could be mistaken for light: and hence, while the Deist has little fault to find with Unitarianism, and compliments it as being closely allied to his own system, he rejects Evangelical Christianity with scorn, as being utterly at war with the dictates of enlightened Reason.

It deserves here to be remarked that, while the Evangelical system is strongly marked by its own peculiarities, so that no one can, with the semblance of plausibility, confound it with any other system, it is charac-

terized also by the utmost symmetry and completeness. Take away for instance the Evangelical doctrine of human depravity, and the whole system falls to the ground ; for any other view of human nature renders the mediatorial work of Christ a superfluous provision. Take away the doctrine of the atonement, and you leave a chasm in the system which makes all that remains of no ultimate value to the sinner. Take away the doctrine of Christ's divinity, and you disqualify him for the great work for which he came into the world,—that of expiating the sins of men. Take away the doctrine of regeneration by the special influence of the Holy Spirit, and you virtually nullify the sacrifice of Christ; for if man is not renewed, even the blood of Christ cannot justify him. Indeed there is perfect harmony throughout the whole system; nothing confused, nothing wanting, nothing superfluous. Leave every thing as it is, and you have a system of doctrine worthy, in this respect, to be the product of heavenly wisdom ; but take away any one of the truths to which I have adverted, and what remains becomes at once anomalous and unsatisfactory.

Has not enough been said to justify the conclusion that Unitarianism has scarcely any thing to distinguish it from Deism; that Evangelical Christianity is altogether a distinct system? If then Christianity, as it is exhibited in the Bible, claims to possess a distinctive character, by suspending everlasting life on the fact of its being cordially received, does not this amount to evidence that Evangelical Christianity, and not Unitarianism, is the system taught in the Bible?

We are to contrast the two systems,



#### IV. In THEIR ADAPTATION TO PACIFY A GUILTY CONSCIENCE.

1. Unitarianism *simply maintains the fact that God forgives the sinner: Evangelical Christianity takes a view of the method by which forgiveness is bestowed.*

Ask the Unitarian what is the ground of his reliance for the forgiveness of his sins, and he will tell you that it is the general mercy of God. Press him with difficulties in the way of this exercise of divine mercy, growing out of the relation which God sustains to him as a righteous Lawgiver, and he disposes of them, just as the Deist does, by eulogizing his paternal character. Press him with the consideration that the Bible in various parts seems to connect the sinner's forgiveness with the atonement of Christ, and he either treats it as mysticism, or finds a mode of explaining it, which throws him back, after all, upon the same foundation. It is not uncommon to hear individuals of this class declare, in so many words, that they desire no better ground for the hope of Heaven than the general mercy of God; and that it is enough for them to know that God forgives sin, without troubling themselves with any ulterior inquiries.

Ask the Evangelical Christian, on the other hand, wherefore it is that *he* trusts in God for pardon, and he will tell you that it is not only because God has revealed himself as "forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin," but especially because he has revealed himself as "*in Christ* reconciling the world to himself, not imputing unto men their trespasses." He recognises indeed in this dispensation an unfathomable depth of mystery; it is easy for him to raise inquiries respecting it which no man, probably no angel, would be able to answer; nevertheless, the great outline of the wonderful scheme he is

permitted to understand ; in Christ as an atoning sacrifice he contemplates the only medium through which pardon can be bestowed ; and as his mind fastens in devout meditation upon the dying Lamb of God, the plan by which forgiveness is secured to him unfolds more and more, till he is enraptured with its harmony, its grandeur, its perfection.

I ask now whether Evangelical Christianity is not far better adapted than Unitarianism to bring peace to the guilty conscience, if we only consider the fact that the former exceeds the latter in the extent of its discoveries ? Be it so that Unitarianism assures the sinner that there is forgiveness with God, and that the sinner admits it ;—yet, do you believe it possible that he should receive this insulated truth with the same deep and unwavering conviction, as if it were accompanied by a view of the plan by which forgiveness is secured to him ; especially if that plan embraces much which is adapted to make a strong appeal both to the understanding and the heart ? In other words, if I believe the simple fact that God extends pardon to sinners without knowing any thing of the manner in which it is done, and this belief brings a degree of peace to my conscience, will not my conviction of this fact become stronger and more practical, if I can have the mystery of redemption somewhat explained to me ; and will not the degree of peace that is secured to my conscience be increased in proportion not only to the strength of my belief that God pardons the guilty, but also to the extent of my discoveries in regard to the channel through which this blessing is communicated ?

2. Unitarianism *maintains the doctrine of forgiveness, apparently at least, at the expense of the character and government of God* : Evangelical Christianity *supplies a security for both.*

No one can deny that one of the characters in which God has revealed himself to man is that of a Lawgiver. And the law which he has given requires perfect obedience, and threatens everlasting death as the penalty of transgression. Man has transgressed the law; and the next thing in order, it should seem, must be the execution of the penalty; for there is the same reason for maintaining the law, as there was for enacting it. But the Unitarian asks, why God, in the plenitude of his mercy, may not extend forgiveness to the transgressor; whether the contrary supposition does not attribute to the gracious Sovereign of the Universe a more inexorable character than even human magistrates usually exemplify; and where is the inconsistency of supposing that the divine government may be conducted according to the analogy of human governments, which distinctly recognise provision for the exercise of pardon? I answer, this feature in the character of human governments results from their imperfection;—from the fact that no general rules that men can make will apply to every particular case. But as God possesses infinite wisdom and goodness, and as he gave his law to the world with a distinct and certain knowledge of every change that would arise, and every case that could occur, is it not a reflection upon his character to suppose that he could in any degree relax from the strictness of his law on mere principles of general mercy? Is it not virtually charging him with having threatened a penalty in full view of all the circumstances in which it would be incurred, without any intention ever to regard it? In view of such a doctrine may I not ask, what becomes of the purity of the divine character, of the dignity and stability of the divine government?

In the system of Evangelical Christianity there is provision for sustaining the character and law of God in the economy of forgiveness, the most ample, and the most satisfactory. We there see how God can be just and yet the justifier of the ungodly; how mercy and truth can meet together, righteousness and peace embrace each other, in the great work of the sinner's salvation. In the death of Christ as a voluntary sacrifice for the sins of men, God's law is magnified and made honourable; while his truth, and justice, and holiness, are exhibited to the universe in delightful combination with his love and mercy. I know that human Reason, in her weakness and vanity, has stumbled at this scheme; but I know too that human Reason has been out of her element, when she has attempted to sit in judgment on the mysteries of redemption. I venture to say that sanctified Reason—Reason disciplined to a cordial submission to God's authority, never saw any thing else in this mighty scheme but perfect consistency and the most sublime and attractive wonders.

Let me inquire now whether the obstacle to the forgiveness of sin to which I have adverted as inseparable from the Unitarian scheme, is not at least formidable enough to occasion some misgivings in the reception of the doctrine of forgiveness? Does not nature herself feel a difficulty on this subject; and is she not startled at the reflection that the exercise of forgiving mercy would seem at least, to involve a conflict among the divine attributes and a triumph of one attribute over another? Suppose the sinner holds on to the hope of pardon, notwithstanding these inward suggestions and remonstrances,—yet, must they not at least abate his confidence in the general truth that God pardons the guilty; and must they not, in the same proportion, render his



conscience a minister of terrour? But, on the other hand, must not every considerate and candid mind acknowledge that there is at least so much of the appearance of consistency in the evangelical doctrine,—so much that looks like harmonizing the attributes and maintaining the authority of God,—so much, I may say, that accords with the suggestions of Reason and the aspirings of Nature, that it is much easier on this ground to indulge a confidence in God's forgiving mercy; and of course proportionally easier to secure the blessing of a pacified conscience?

3. Unitarianism *suspends the forgiveness of sin on a compliance with terms, which are altogether indefinite; while the terms which Evangelical Christianity prescribes are accurately defined and easily understood.*

It is admitted that many Unitarians, in speaking of the terms of forgiveness, hold the same general language which is used by Evangelical Christians: for instance, they do not hesitate to declare that it is the sinner's duty to exercise repentance towards God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and to live a life of holy obedience. But when you ask them to proceed a step farther, and tell you what they mean by repentance, and faith and obedience, you will find that the ideas which they attach to these words are extremely indefinite. By faith they will perhaps mean a belief in the divine mission of Jesus Christ, and, in some general sense, of the divine authority of the Scriptures; while yet they will maintain that it matters little what particular doctrines are derived from the Scriptures. By repentance they understand the exercise of some general regrets in view of having done wrong, without any deep sense of the evil of sin, as exhibited either in its nature or effects; and hence that

state of mind which is commonly called conviction of sin is regarded by most Unitarians as the result of nothing better than a gloomy and childish credulity, and by some is treated with absolute contempt. By obedience they would seem generally to understand nothing beyond a decent moral life ;—such a life as every man must lead in order to secure to himself the favourable regards of those around him. Now I maintain that there is in this view of the terms on which forgiveness is bestowed a degree of abstraction, which must render it extremely difficult for any one to decide whether he has complied with them ;—not to say that they become so comparatively unimportant, that it is not easy to believe that so great a blessing as forgiveness should be suspended on a compliance with them. If faith is a mere general belief in the divine mission of Christ, or in the authority of Revelation, of what degree of strength must it be in order to secure my forgiveness ? May it be only a feeble and doubting assent, or must it be a deep and unwavering conviction ? If repentance amounts to little more than a mere general regret that we are not as wise and good as the angels, how shall I know when that regret becomes sufficiently strong to constitute a ground of restoration to the divine favour ? If Christian obedience is nothing more than merely carrying myself decently among my fellow men, and avoiding the grosser vices that deform society,—nothing more than being just and honest and charitable in my intercourse with the world, and if you please, rendering a respectful attention to the institutions of religion ; how shall I know when I have reached that point of external decency and morality at which my transgressions shall be forgiven and my sin covered ? Do you not perceive that, in respect to each of these great articles of duty, Unitarianism is altogether

indefinite ;—that, while it is difficult to ascertain what it really inculcates, it is no less difficult to determine whether its requisitions have been fulfilled ?

In the terms of forgiveness, as they are proposed and understood by Evangelical Christianity, there is nothing obscure or indefinite. By faith she understands a cordial reception of the whole testimony of God, and especially that which relates to the salvation of the sinner ;—an humble and affectionate reliance on Christ as the only and the all-sufficient Saviour. By repentance she understands a deep and affecting view of sin, a hearty sorrow for it, a resolute forsaking of it, especially from considerations connected with the cross of Christ. By obedience she means nothing less than a respect to all God's commandments ; to those which regard the keeping of the heart no less than the regulation of the life ; those which prescribe the duty which we owe to God, as truly as those which more immediately concern our relations to our fellow creatures. Taking these definitions of the several exercises or duties on which forgiveness is suspended, you have something which is at once intelligible and palpable :—the standard of Christian character becomes fixed ; the evidence of Christian character is ascertained with comparative ease ; and if men remain undecided in respect to the great question whether they have complied with the terms of the gospel, it must be from a defect in their examination of themselves,—not because the terms have not a fixed and intelligible meaning.

You will readily see the bearing of these remarks upon the question, which of the two systems is most adapted to bring peace to the sinner's conscience. The amount of peace, other things being equal, must be in proportion to the degree of certainty which is felt that

the terms on which forgiveness is offered, have been complied with ; but we have seen that, as Unitarianism explains these terms, it is exceedingly difficult to know what they are, and still more difficult to know whether they have been fulfilled ; while Evangelical Christianity explains them so fully and definitely that the weakest may understand them, and he that is faithful in the study of his own heart may easily determine, with a good degree of confidence, whether or not he has complied with them. Hence it follows that the latter system is adapted, far more than the former, to sooth the guilty and wakeful conscience into peace. If an awakened sinner were to apply to me to prescribe for his wounded spirit, and I had no other view of the terms of salvation than that loose and indefinite one which Unitarians generally hold,—what better would it be than a mockery of his wo, if I were to exhort him to comply with those terms ; for when I had explained them to him as well as I could, I could bring home nothing to his heart in the form of a tangible reality ; and peradventure, after he had struggled hard to fulfil them, he would be unable to determine whether he had even taken a step towards obtaining the divine forgiveness. But, upon the principles of Evangelical Christianity, I can answer the awakened sinner with confidence, and make him understand with ease the import of what I say : I can exhort him to exercise repentance towards God, and to apply by faith to the Saviour of sinners, and feel that I am dealing in nothing that is abstract or theoretical ;—nothing but what, by God's grace, he may do, and may gain comfortable evidence of having done. Here I am sure that I do not trifle with the sinner's anguish ; for I not only prescribe a remedy which is intelligible and pal-



pable, but one whose efficacy has been tested by a uniform experience.

4. Unitarianism *recognises no special divine influence upon the heart to witness to our adoption: Evangelical Christianity recognises the Holy Spirit as witnessing with our spirits that we are the children of God.*

I hardly need say that Unitarians deny the very existence of the Holy Spirit as a distinct agent in the economy of our salvation. Hence Le Clerc, a celebrated Unitarian writer, says, "It is no ways incongruous that, by the Holy Spirit, or Spirit of God, we should understand *the spirit of holiness* and *constancy* which the gospel gives." And hence too, a Unitarian writer of our own country, says, "By the influences of the Spirit of God are meant *all the divine means* employed to save us from sin,"—as "the Bible," "all the instructions we receive which are conformable to the Scriptures," "the various discipline of divine Providence," &c. In accordance with these representations, Unitarians generally, so far as I know, exclude every view of the work of sanctification which recognises any other divine agency upon the heart than that which is implied in the operation of the general laws of Providence. They do not deny that there are various providential helps proffered to a good man in the prosecution of a virtuous course; but they usually speak of virtue in regard to the manner of its attainment, in a way which is only fitted to show forth the praise of man;—not to say that the quality which they call *virtue* has little affinity to evangelical holiness. Of the work of sanctification, as having its beginning in the regeneration of the moral nature, and being performed by that same Almighty Power which, at the original creation, caused the light to shine out of

darkness, Unitarianism knows nothing; and as the witness of the Spirit to our adoption is included in this more general view, so the rejection of the latter necessarily supposes that of the former; as the rejection of *any* general proposition, involves that of all the particulars. If I cannot believe that the Holy Ghost new-creates my heart, and carries forward by a divine energy operating in accordance with the laws of my moral nature, the work which he has himself begun, I surely cannot believe that he testifies to my own spirit that I am an adopted child: I must set this down to the charge of enthusiasm; and in doing so, I reject that which, if admitted, would be a most decisive testimony to the fact of my having received the divine forgiveness.

Evangelical Christianity hails with joy the witness of the Spirit. She recognises the Holy Ghost as performing such a work of grace in the soul, exciting such holy affections and purposes, accompanied with such devout and elevated joys, that the soul, by turning an eye inward upon its own operations, becomes satisfied of the reality of its adoption. Such a testimony of the Spirit, you perceive, however impossible it may be for an unrenewed mind adequately to estimate it, is no creature of enthusiasm: on the contrary, it constitutes a legitimate part of the true economy of sanctification. Enthusiasts, I know, have often imagined that they had this divine testimony in their favour, and have boldly asserted it; when their unholy lives have given the lie to their declaration; but, from the nature of the case, you perceive that it *cannot* be enjoyed by any but those who have been the subjects of a sanctifying operation;—those who have the graces of the Spirit in lively exercise; for it is the same Spirit that witnesseth in the Bible that “without holiness no man can see the Lord,” that witnesseth

in the heart to our personal adoption ; and it is impossible that the same Spirit should render a contradictory testimony. If then, the Holy Ghost, which forms in the believer's soul the graces of the Spirit, and brings them into such vigorous exercise that their reality is unquestionable, thus witnesses to his adoption, diffusing light and joy through his heart, I ask what higher evidence than this he could have that his name has been written in the book of life ? The witness of the Spirit no doubt varies in different cases in respect to its degrees of strength, according to the vigor and spirituality of the believer's affections ; but I may safely appeal to the experience of multitudes for evidence that this testimony is sometimes so decisive as to cast out all apprehension, and leave the soul for a time at least to a full and blessed assurance of its own title to Heaven.

But it is the evidence that I am the object of the divine forgiveness that must bring peace to my conscience. Here I have that evidence in a form the most welcome and satisfactory. God the Spirit whispers in my bosom, and assures me that I am an adopted child. But Unitarianism, in rejecting this testimony, sets aside the highest evidence which the believer can gain of his adoption. In pronouncing that to be delusion which Evangelical Christianity recognises as living truth, she leaves the soul to doubt in respect to the reality of its acceptance, and in the same degree leaves conscience in possession of its "inward stings." Who that desires to be freed from the nestlings of a guilty conscience will not turn away from Unitarianism ? Who that desires the blessing of a pacified conscience, but will seek for it in a cordial reception of the truths of Evangelical Christianity ?

It remains that we contrast these systems,

V. AS TO THEIR TENDENCY TO PRODUCE AND CHERISH THE CHRISTIAN VIRTUES.

And here let it be distinctly understood that I am not at all disposed to deny, and certainly have no warrant for denying, that there is among the Unitarians much that is amiable and praiseworthy and of good report. There have been, and still are, among them names which I delight to honour; and that, because they are associated not merely with high intellectual culture, but with noble and generous dispositions, and with extensive, I may say, eminent usefulness. What I have to do under this article is to exhibit the influence of the two systems in the formation of the *religious* character; and the admission which I have now made will not be found to interfere with any statements which the execution of this design may involve. We will glance at some of the Christian virtues in detail, that we may see the influence which these systems respectively exert in the production and promotion of them.

1. *Love to God.*

We may love God either for his essential character, or his beneficent communications; for what he is in himself, or for what he is to us. In the former case, the affection partakes more of complacency; in the latter case, more of gratitude; though love to God in the proper sense legitimately includes both. Let us see now whether this Christian grace is more likely to exist and flourish under the influence of Unitarianism or of Evangelical Christianity.

And here I am met at the very outset with a charge from the Unitarian against Evangelical Christianity, which, if it were true, would supersede the necessity of all further remark on this topic;—viz, that this system supposes that there is little or no compassion in the na-



ture of God; or at least that there is so much of vindictiveness that he will not pardon the guilty, or bestow upon them any blessing, until "a gallows has been erected in the centre of the universe," and his own Son executed upon it as a full satisfaction to his offended justice. I reply to this charge, first, that it is a libel upon the system which it is professedly designed to represent;—a bold and impious caricature of the doctrine of atonement, in which no Evangelical Christian ever recognised even the semblance of his own creed. And next, let me carry you back to the consideration to which I had occasion to advert under the preceding article—that, though God is presented to us in the character of a Father, yet he also sustains to us the relation of a Lawgiver; that, as his law was infinitely perfect, so it would be inconsistent with the divine perfections that its authority should not be maintained; and hence arose the necessity either that the transgressor should suffer in his own person the penalty he had incurred, or that some grand expedient should be adopted by which mercy and truth might harmonize in his forgiveness. And God did devise such an expedient:—He "gave his own Son" to die for us; and yet it was, on the part of his Son, a voluntary act; for "*He gave himself* up for us all." Now who will venture to say that this was a vindictive measure? Who rather will not acknowledge that it was the most gracious measure which the heart of infinite mercy ever devised? Surely it was gracious in its operations towards the sinner; for it was adapted to avert from him the greatest evils,—to secure to him the richest blessings. And even in respect to the Redeemer himself, who "bore our iniquities and carried our sorrows,"—*who* will say that its ultimate bearings were otherwise than gracious; for while he was a vo-

luntary party in the covenant of redemption, it was promised him that he should "see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied;" that his mediatorial sufferings should find their reward in his mediatorial glory. And this reward he is now actually receiving on his throne; and it is destined to become increasingly glorious till he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God even the Father. Am I not warranted then in saying that, while this expedient for the forgiveness of sins was necessary, so far as we can see, to secure the stability and dignity of the divine government, there is nothing in it, when fairly examined, that even seems to savour of injustice or cruelty; on the contrary, that it bespeaks an infinitely higher degree of love and grace than would have been indicated by the bestowment of pardon irrespectively of any such measure?

I put it now to the enlightened Reason of any of you to decide whether that view of the essential character of God which is presented by Unitarianism, or that which is exhibited by Evangelical Christianity, has more in it that is worthy to be admired, and venerated and loved. Even his *paternal* character shines far more brightly as it is held forth by the latter system, than by the former; for while the blessings bestowed, are, as we shall presently see, incomparably greater in the one case than in the other, they are bestowed at an infinitely greater expense; and of course indicate a proportionally higher regard for our happiness. And as to his character as a Lawgiver, Evangelical Christianity completely sustains it, and throws around it a burning lustre, while Unitarianism subjects him to the imputation of weakly compromising the rights of the Eternal throne. The former system, in attempting to vindicate and honour his character as a Father, lays his character as a Lawgiver in

the dust : the latter sustains the honours of both, and exhibits them in such perfect harmony that they mutually reflect glory upon each other.

But there is another view to be taken of this subject to which I have already adverted;—I refer to the consideration that the blessings which God bestows are of infinitely higher value, as they are represented by Evangelical Christianity, than as they are represented by Unitarianism. The latter scheme makes pardon but an inconsiderable blessing, because it views sin as only a light offence : the former makes it a blessing of superlative value, because it views sin as an evil of indescribable magnitude. The latter regards sanctification as a comparatively unimportant matter, as it denies that human nature is radically disordered, and attributes to it nothing more than an accidental imperfection : the former infinitely heightens the value of this blessing by viewing man as polluted in his whole nature ; as possessed of an inclination which would lead him to sin, and of course would subject him to suffer, forever, if it were not subdued by the power of Almighty grace. On the principles of the one system, Heaven itself loses, in a great degree, its legitimate attractions ; for while that which really constitutes its chief glory is not there,—I mean the Lamb in the midst of the throne receiving the homage due to God only from the whole company of the angels and the ransomed in view of his atoning sacrifice,—the economy of that world is represented as differing from the economy of this, chiefly in the fact that it furnishes higher facilities for intellectual improvement. But, on the principles of the other system, Heaven becomes an object of infinite attraction ; for there the wonders of redemption are displayed and celebrated ; and all the inhabitants have their harps unceasingly attuned to

the same thrilling and ennobling theme ; and there is every thing to occupy delightfully all the powers of the soul ;—to keep the intellect rising to new improvements, and the imagination soaring to loftier heights, and the heart kindling with fresh rapture, and the whole man approximating toward God's own perfection, through an illimitable course of existence. If you will read the descriptions of Heaven which have been given by the most distinguished Unitarian writers, you will find that they are comparatively tame and frigid ;—that there is little in them that is fitted to seize hold of your affections, and endear Heaven to your heart ; but when you read the writings of Evangelical Christians on this subject, your mind is touched by a sacred impulse, and your bosom glows with devout fervour, and you are at loss for language in which to give utterance to your labouring and lofty conceptions. Is it not true then that the Christian is a far greater debtor to God's goodness on the principles of Evangelical Christianity, than on those of Unitarianism ?

Whether then we consider God as an object to be loved in view of what he is in himself, or in consideration of what he has done for us, I am sure that we are fairly brought to the conclusion that the Evangelical system has greatly the advantage of the other in supplying motives to attract us toward our Almighty Benefactor.

## 2. *Gratitude to Christ.*

Both systems professedly recognise this as one of the elements of Christian character : Let us see then which is best adapted to awaken and cherish it.

Unitarianism, (I mean of course that species of it which prevails most at the present day, and which denies that Jesus Christ had any existence previous to his



being born at Bethlehem,) Unitarianism, I say, is obliged to maintain that his coming into the world had not even the merit of a *voluntary* act; for what greater absurdity can there be than to suppose that a being who had no previous existence should be voluntary in his own birth? Evangelical Christianity, on the other hand, views him as having existed not only previously to his birth, but from eternity; and of course as having come into the world, not merely, as every other human being does, by a decree over which he had no controul, but in obedience to the dictates of his own will; agreeably to the prophetic description which is given of his advent,—“Lo, I come to do thy will O God!” In the one case, he is to be viewed only as an instrument raised up for an important purpose, as was Peter or Paul, and performing his part merely in view of the circumstances in which Providence placed him; in the other case, as a great Agent, deliberately forming his own purpose in the ages of eternity, and, in the fulness of time, voluntarily coming forth for its execution. Paul has a claim upon the gratitude of the church for his labours and sufferings in her behalf; but what a difference between his claim and that of Jesus, when you remember that the former came into the world simply because God ordained it, and became an Apostle only because sovereign grace called and qualified him for it; and that the latter came forth to our help from the glory which he had with the Father before the world was, because he had beheld and pitied our condition from eternity!

And then Evangelical Christianity attributes to Christ a far higher degree of *condescension* than Unitarianism. In the act of his coming into the world Unitarianism cannot admit that there is *any* condescension; for condescension implies a voluntary act; and no one will say

that an individual is voluntary in being born. The only condescension which he evinces, upon this scheme, is that of an innocent man submitting to undeserved indignities for the benefit of his fellow men ; but, on the Evangelical scheme, his condescension outruns the farthest stretch of human thought. Hear the Apostle's description of it, and say whether it is not so:—" Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God ; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men : and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Would you think it a condescending act for an earthly monarch to stoop to the wants of a wretched beggar ? What was it then for the King of Heaven to exchange a throne for a cross, that he might save a worm from death ?

And as for the *purpose* for which Jesus came,—Unitarianism knows no higher purpose than to reform the world by his instructions and example, and to seal the truth of his testimony with his blood ; while Evangelical Christianity recognises as the great end of his mission, the giving of his life a ransom for us. I will not say that *he* has conferred no benefit upon me, who has set before me my duty, and presented motives to the discharge of it ; but I will say that he has done nothing for me in comparison with him who has rolled away the grand obstacle to my salvation by atoning for my sins ; who has brought peace to my conscience by sprinkling that conscience with his own blood ; who has gone into the Heavens to plead the merit of his sacrifice as the foundation of my acceptance. Let other benefits be duly estimated ; but let nothing be brought into comparison with the benefits of Christ's redemption.

Say now, will the Evangelical Christian or the Unitarian be more grateful to his Saviour? If the system held by the former represents him as having come to save us, from purposes of mercy which he had himself been active in forming, while that held by the latter exhibits him as altogether involuntary in his advent; if the system of the one attributes to him but a small degree of condescension, while that of the other makes his condescension infinite; if the one recognises him only in the relation of an instructor and guide—not unlike that which other good men have sustained to the world, while the other contemplates him in a relation entirely peculiar,—not only as proclaiming salvation to the wretched and guilty, but as actually purchasing it;—if these things are so, judge ye whether the Evangelical Christian or the Unitarian finds most to call forth his gratitude to Christ. Read the writings of both, and say whether that which might be expected from the nature of the systems, is not fully realized in actual experience; whether Christ is not the all-absorbing theme of the one, whether any thing but Christ does not constitute the burden of the other.

### 3. *Benevolence to man.*

I here use the word *benevolence* in its more extensive sense; as including a regard to the interests not only of the body but of the soul; not only of time but of eternity. He who provides for the temporal relief of the wretched and destitute,—who furnishes bread for the hungry, and raiment for the naked, and a habitation for the houseless, is certainly a benefactor to his fellow men: but he who, viewing them exposed to an everlasting death, puts forth his hand in an effort to save them,—who, contemplating the millions that are perishing for lack of the bread of life, cheerfully contributes of his

substance to send it to them, and even denies himself, and goes forth among them, as a herald of salvation,—such a man, I say, exhibits the spirit of benevolence in a still nobler form ;—so much nobler as the interests of the immortal spirit are superior to those of the tenement which it inhabits. Let us see then whether a spirit of benevolence in this extensive and most legitimate sense, finds more to foster it in Unitarianism or in Evangelical Christianity.

Evangelical Christianity finds far higher *examples* of benevolence than does Unitarianism, in the character of God and of his Son ;—a point which I have already endeavoured to illustrate, in speaking of the different claims which both the Creator and the Redeemer have upon our gratitude, in view of the two systems. If this fact be admitted then, (and I do not see how it can be successfully questioned,) you perceive that it is adapted to exert a mighty influence in favour of Evangelical Christianity, in regard to the promotion of a benevolent spirit. It results from the constitution of our nature that the examples which we are most accustomed to contemplate and admire gradually become incorporated, in respect to some of their leading qualities, among the elements of our intellectual and moral habits. The more of benevolence then the Christian sees in the character of God and of Jesus Christ, (as these are the objects with which his faith is most conversant,) the more will a spirit of good will to man glow in his bosom. Suppose you were in the habit of associating with an individual who exhibited in some degree a benevolent spirit, and occasionally performed deeds of mercy,—no doubt your intercourse with him might have some influence in waking up generous feelings in your own heart; but suppose you were to be the constant companion of such a man as How-



ard,—were to see him going through the world, like an angel of mercy, and wearing out his life for the relief of human wo,—it were scarcely possible, if there were even the germe of a benevolent spirit in your bosom, but that that spirit, under such an influence, should blaze forth in bright and vigorous action. I would reverently apply this illustration to the case before us. Unitarianism sees a lower degree, Evangelical Christianity, a higher degree, of good will to man, in the great objects which are proposed for our imitation: must there not then be a proportional difference in the amount of influence which they respectively exert in forming man to the same benevolent temper?

Evangelical Christianity enforces the *obligation* to cultivate a benevolent spirit, far more strongly than Unitarianism. It is one of the grand laws of the divine administration,—a law which will controul the decisions of the final judgment, and the equity of which instantly commends itself to every mind, that “unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required.” But, we have already seen that incomparably more has been done for us, incomparably more has been promised to us, on the principles of Evangelical Christianity than on the principles of Unitarianism. So much the greater then is our obligation to exhibit a benevolent spirit toward others; for it is by this means especially that we are to glorify God, and to indicate our sense of his goodness towards ourselves. Hence we find that his gracious recognition of the beneficence of his people toward the children of want and wo, is one of the circumstances which have been prophetically exhibited to us, in a description of the judgment:—“Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.” In doing good to the

wretched and helpless, I am fulfilling God's command:— it is indeed a command which is right in itself, and which, on account of its very nature, as well as the authority from which it emanates, I should be bound to obey; but clearly my obligation to obedience must be rendered more or less impressive by the relation he sustains to me as a Benefactor. If I feel that he has given me my existence, and all my faculties and means of enjoyment, and moreover has sent his Son into the world to teach me the divine will, and encourage me to the discharge of duty, I cannot deny that all this creates a powerful obligation on my part to obey his command to do good to his creatures. But if, in addition to this, I am permitted to view him as having given his Son to redeem me from the curse of the second death by becoming my atoning sacrifice; if I can contemplate in the work of redemption a provision which has filled Heaven with wonder and rapture, and reflect that that provision is to raise *me* to the abodes of glory, and that, without it, I must have sunk into the abyss of despair, must not my sense of obligation to obey this command be immeasurably heightened; and shall I not regard it one of my highest privileges to do good to others, when such infinite good has been accomplished for me?

Moreover, Evangelical Christianity opens a far more extensive and interesting *field* of benevolence than Unitarianism. I refer here particularly to the views which the two systems present of the character and condition of man; the one exhibiting him as the subject of a deep moral malady, which must prove fatal unless it is removed, the other as the subject of an accidental imperfection, which furnishes no occasion for any serious alarm. If we look at man merely as an inhabitant of this world, subject to vicissitude and calamity, and sometimes actu-

ally sinking under a burden of woe, we can hardly fail to be impressed with the conviction that he is a proper object of our sympathy and our charity. If we view him as ignorant of the first principles of religion, a slave of animal appetite, an outcast from virtuous and even decent society, we shall be constrained to feel still more deeply, that there is that in his condition which appeals strongly to our benevolent sensibilities. But when we ascend one step higher, and view him in his relation not only to this world but to the next,—in his relation to God, not only as a creature of his care and goodness, but as a rebel against his government;—when we contemplate him in the light of that coming judgment in which he shall not be able to stand, of that wretched eternity whose fierce terrors will bring dismay to the stoutest heart; and when, in connexion with all this, we remember that he is yet within the reach of God's pardoning mercy and renewing grace, and that our humble instrumentality may avail to his being made the subject of these rich and everlasting blessings;—I ask you whether this view of his condition is not fitted to induce yearnings of compassion in his behalf? But this is precisely the view which Evangelical Christianity takes of it; whereas Unitarianism regards such a view as scarcely better than a libel upon human nature. If my fellow creature is entitled to my compassion at all in proportion to the degree of calamity to which he is subject, there is surely that in Evangelical Christianity which must awaken my compassion towards him far more strongly than it ever could be awakened through the influence of Unitarianism. And while each individual who has not been converted to God becomes, in the light of the former system, an object adapted strongly to draw forth my compassionate regards, when I cast my eye over the

world, I behold hundreds of millions of beings who are in precisely that condition ; and far the greater portion of whom have never heard even of the existence of Christianity. Is not here a field for benevolent effort of which Unitarianism knows nothing ? It is a field of spiritual wretchedness and death, as long and broad as the world.

If I have succeeded in showing that Evangelical Christianity points to higher examples of benevolence in the Creator and Redeemer of the world, that it enforces more strongly the obligations to benevolence, that it opens a more extensive and interesting field for the exercise of benevolence, than the opposite system, it is fair to conclude that it is adapted in a proportionally higher degree to promote a benevolent spirit.

#### 4. *Humility.*

In order to see the different tendencies of these systems in respect to the promotion of this virtue, we need only glance at the different views which they take of the natural character and condition of man, and the provision made for his redemption.

What is there in *man's own character and condition* which constitutes a ground for humility on the principles of Unitarianism. There is the fact that he is infinitely below his Maker, and a little lower than the angels ; that both his knowledge and his virtue are in the present state imperfect ; and that he is subject to various trials which, however, are fitted to subserve his moral improvement. As for his destiny, Unitarianism acknowledges that there is some obscurity resting over it ; but she sees nothing in sin to warrant the apprehension of an eternal punishment. Evangelical Christianity, on the contrary, teaches man that he is ruined in his whole nature ; that God's moral image is completely effaced from



his soul; that a spirit of rebellion against the Ruler of the world and against his own infinite Benefactor, is enthroned in his bosom; that there is a sentence of condemnation burning against him which consigns him to an endless perdition. And is not here enough to make him humble? Can he, with this view of his own character, venture before the throne of infinite purity with any other than a subdued spirit? Will he not often find himself breathing forth the prayer, "God be merciful to me a sinner"? But, upon the opposite system, such feelings and expressions of self-abasement would be unreasonable. If I have nothing more to make me humble than the reflection that I am frail, dependant, imperfect, mortal, is it not probable that the influence even of these considerations will be neutralized by the paramount influence of other considerations connected with the dignity of my nature; especially as being a creature of God, and a creature of immortality?

But we are brought to the same result, if we notice the different views which the two systems take of the *remedial provision* which the gospel offers. On the principles of Unitarianism, that provision scarcely carries a rebuke to the indulgence of man's self-complacency: on the principles of Evangelical Christianity, it prostrates him in the dust. For if God has done nothing more for man than send his Son into the world to inculcate a purer system of moral virtue, and to exemplify the purity of that system in his life, it is a legitimate conclusion that there is nothing in man's character or condition to furnish much occasion either for apprehension or self-abasement; as it is fair to judge of the exigency of the case by the provision with which Infinite Wisdom has been pleased to meet it. But if God has sent his Son not merely to instruct but to atone; if

the Son whom he has sent is not merely a man like ourselves but the Brightness of the Father's Glory, and the express Image of his Person ; then surely this would indicate that there was some mighty exigency to be met ; that human nature must be in absolute ruin, to require such an amazing interposition to restore it. Indeed it is from the cross of Christ that the Evangelical Christian derives his most powerful arguments for humility : Never does he feel so much his utter unworthiness even to lift up his eyes to Heaven, as when the eye of his faith rests on his Redeemer's expiring agonies ; but the Unitarian, with *his* views, may incur little inconsistency, if he gaze upon the cross, and then go away and wrap himself up in the robes of his wonted self-complacency.

5. *Christian obedience* : by which I mean an external compliance with the divine commands, from motives which meet the divine approbation. I shall limit myself to a consideration of Christian obedience in its more self-denying forms.

Of the influence of the two systems in developing and cherishing several of the great principles of Christian action, I have already spoken ; and there remains little to be said under this article, other than to apply the conclusions to which we have actually arrived. What more powerful principles of religious action are there than love to God and gratitude to Christ ? If then, Evangelical Christianity contributes to form and strengthen these far more than Unitarianism, the former must, in the same degree, exceed the latter, in nerving the Christian's hand for bold and vigorous action. If the one is much better fitted to promote the spirit of benevolence than the other, there must be a proportional difference between them in the amount of self-denying effort to which they respectively lead ; for who does not know that where the ice of

human selfishness is but half thawed out from the heart, it is in vain to look for a life of consistent benevolence; and that where, on the other hand, the spirit of the good Samaritan has taken possession of the heart, the deeds of the good Samaritan will be manifest in the conduct? If it be once admitted that the Evangelical system exerts a more powerful influence than Unitarianism in moulding the Christian affections, you have only to keep in view the fact that these affections constitute the principles of moral conduct,—that the heart is to the life what the fountain is to the stream; to arrive at once at the conclusion that the former system must lead to a higher and nobler course of religious action than the latter; that, while the one tends to self-indulgence and inaction, the other prompts to vigorous and persevering self-denial.

And here I trust it will not be thought invidious, if I direct your attention for a moment from what we might expect would be, to what we know actually is;—in other words, to the comparative amount of self-denying and beneficent activity which has really followed,—still follows, in the track of the two systems. Well am I aware that many Unitarians have exhibited a noble and philanthropick spirit, especially by contributing liberally of their substance for the relief of human wo; but, if I mistake not, you will find, in nearly every instance, that their benevolent efforts have been directed, rather to supply the wants of the body, than to meet the exigencies of the soul. The history of Unitarianism may safely be challenged for one such name as that of Swartz, or Eliot, or thousands of others, that illumine the record of Evangelical Christianity. And I venture to say that such a character as these men possessed, never could be formed under the influence of the Unitarian system. If

they had believed that man, instead of being dead in trespasses and sins, and liable to an eternal death, is only an imperfect being, and has little or nothing to fear in respect to the future, they would not have sacrificed so cheerfully their earthly interests to carry him the gospel of salvation. If they had regarded Jesus Christ as a mere human teacher divinely commissioned to proclaim God's will, it is impossible that their gratitude towards him should have engaged them to such acts of heroick self-denial as to lead them not even to count their lives dear in his service. No, no, I repeat, such characters were never formed—never *could* be formed, under the operation of any other than Evangelical principles.—There is in them too much of that Christian heroism which shrinks not from bearing the cross any where, every where, to have had its origin in any thing else than the constraining influence of the love of Christ.—And I may speak not only of what has been, but of what is; for never was this difference between the two systems more strikingly exemplified than in some of the doings of the present day. If you look into the vast wilderness which still constitutes no inconsiderable portion of our country, you will see here and there a white man teaching the poor Indians to read, and kneeling with them in their devotions and directing their hearts toward Heaven; and if you follow him from day to day, you will see that he is wearing out his life in this humble and self-denying vocation. If you direct your view across the ocean, you will see another set of men labouring on the burning plains of India, and another still in the cold regions of the North, and yet another among the degraded Hottentots of Africa, for the benevolent purpose of making known the gospel; and this too at the hazard of meeting a premature, if not a violent,



death. These are men who might have staid at home, and enjoyed all the blessings of civilized and Christian and domestick society; but such was their love to Christ, and such their benevolence to man, that they left all to serve their master and to save their fellow creatures.—Need I ask whether these men are Unitarians or Evangelical Christians? Need I ask whether the great system of operations which is going forward for the conversion of the world is sustained by Unitarians or Evangelical Christians? I mean not to be invidious when I say that Evangelical Christianity does the work, while Unitarianism stands by and congratulates herself that she can be true to her principles without making such mighty sacrifices; nay, and sometimes denounces the loftiest enterprizes of benevolence as nothing better than the dreams of a delirious fanaticism.

1. It is an obvious deduction from the preceding train of remark, that *a belief in the great truths of Christianity constitutes the only legitimate basis of Christian character.*

I am well aware that there may be much that has the semblance of Christian conduct where the peculiar doctrines of Christianity are rejected:—there may be the outward decencies of a moral life;—there may be a uniform course of equitable and honourable dealing, and a spirit of courtesy and generosity and benevolence may breathe in all the intercourse between man and man, and yet not one of those cardinal doctrines by which Christianity is especially distinguished from Natural Religion, may have found a lodgment either in the heart or the understanding. But all this may exist independently of what I mean by true Christian character: it may be merely the operation of a naturally generous spirit, or it may result even from the calculations of self-love.

Christian character implies much more: it supposes not merely that the outward act be right, but that the inward feeling be right also;—right, I mean, according to the standard of God's word; and to suppose that this could happen independently of a belief in the truths of the gospel, were to admit an absurdity. We feel on every subject agreeably to the views which we take of it; and this remark applies to religion as truly as any thing else. Certain it is then that our religious character will be modified by our views of religious truth: of course where the great truths of the gospel are absolutely rejected, there can be no foundation for religious character.

Never then, for a moment, admit the absurd and dangerous doctrine that it is no matter what a man believes provided his life be good; for while this doctrine supposes that a pure stream may emanate from a corrupt fountain, and that that God who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and whose prerogative it is to search the heart, after all, passes upon the character in view of what is merely external, and connives at a spirit of rebellion within provided there be the appearance of decency without; it inevitably leads to a disregard of all truth, and puts man in the impious attitude of casting contempt upon the divine authority. Rely on it, my friends, if the truths of the gospel had not been of mighty importance, they would never have been revealed, especially at such amazing expense; and just in proportion as you hold views which detract from their importance, you put your immortal interests in jeopardy. Men are sanctified by the truth—the peculiar truths of the gospel—and by nothing else: of course, if this great means of sanctification is rejected, where is there any ground for hope that they will be sanctified at all? And if they

are not sanctified, how will they ever enter Heaven? Take heed that you do not rely for salvation upon mere intellectual views of truth; but take heed also that you do not undervalue a correct speculative faith; for while such a faith enters essentially into the constitution of the Christian character, remember that indifference to the truth is the legitimate preparation of the mind for a league with dangerous and destructive error.

2. *Of how much greater value does the Bible become on the principles of Evangelical Christianity, than on those of Unitarianism!*

Once admit that men may be saved without a knowledge of the great truths which the Bible reveals, and you admit that which makes the Book itself of comparatively little importance; because, though it may contain much that is excellent and adapted to exalt the human character, yet if, after all, salvation,—the richest of all blessings, can be attained without it, who will say that it may not at least *safely* be dispensed with? But how much is the case changed, when you come to admit that a knowledge of these truths, *communicated in some way or other*, is absolutely essential to the salvation of the soul; and that he that believeth them not shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him! Now the Unitarian maintains that a belief in the gospel is not essential to salvation; that those who have the Bible in their hands and reject its divine authority altogether, may still be good men and candidates for Heaven; and if the Bible contains nothing more than *he* finds in it, he is right and consistent in doing so: for surely if he should cast it to the winds, every thing that he regards essential would be left to him in the system of Natural Religion. The Evangelical Christian, on the other hand, regards the Bible as disclosing the only

means of eternal life ; he looks upon every sinner's case as hopeless, until he is interested by faith in that atoning sacrifice which the Bible alone reveals. Here then the secret comes out wherefore it is that Evangelical Christians place so much higher value upon the Scriptures than Unitarians ; wherefore it is that the former are sending them, as if on the wings of the morning, all over the world, while the latter, for the most part, manifest little interest in any such enterprize. The truth is that both are acting in consistency with their own principles : both are treating the Bible according to their respective views of its importance. Could the British and Foreign Bible Society, or the American Bible Society,—I had almost said, the two brightest glories of the age,—be sustained, think you, by Unitarian zeal and charity? I venture to say, not for a single year. These institutions could never move on but under the all inspiring consideration that, in sending the Bible abroad, we are imparting a gift with which God himself has connected the soul's everlasting salvation.

3. Our subject shows us *the intimate connexion between Unitarianism and one species of Universalism.*

There are those, I know, who arrive at the conclusion that all men will finally be saved from a perverted view of Christ's atonement ; maintaining that his death is the literal payment of the debt which the world owed to divine justice ;—a consideration upon which all men, irrespective of personal qualifications, have the glories of Heaven made secure to them. But the same general conclusion, to say the least, *as* legitimately results from the scheme of modern Unitarianism ; and that, whether you view it in respect to the character of man, or the character of God. For if man be the subject of nothing worse than accidental infirmity and imperfection,—an



evil so slight that it may be passed by without any atonement, surely it was unreasonable to suppose that it should lead to any such fearful result as eternal misery. And then again, if God's character as a Lawgiver is to be merged in his character as a Father ; if his justice can give place to his mercy in the pardon of *any* sin, without some arrangement for securing the rights of his government, it is reasonable to conclude that there can be *no degree* of sin that is so odious to him as to constitute the ground of an eternal condemnation. The Unitarian then, upon his own principles, is fairly brought to the conclusion, either that there will be no punishment, or but a limited punishment, for the sinner, in a future world. And most Unitarians, so far as I know, not only admit this conclusion, but earnestly contend for it : in other words, they adopt one or the other of the systems of Universalism as part of their own creed.

If then Unitarianism has actually adopted Universalism, so that, in point of fact, the one has become incorporated with the other, I ask whether this new feature in the Unitarian's creed does not array it still more strongly against the word of God, as well as heighten its dangerous moral tendencies. I know that all the corrupt propensities of the heart plead for the doctrine of universal salvation ; but God's word brands it as a lie ; and conscience loudly seconds the testimony. That it is not *possible* for a good man to hold this doctrine in certain connexions I will not assert ; but I assert without hesitation that there is no doctrine which more effectually licenses every corrupt principle of our nature ; which more certainly throws open the floodgates of crime ; or the reception of which more legitimately warrants the expectation of a thoroughly depraved character. Enter not into this path of the wicked. Turn from it,

and pass away, as you value your interests for eternity.

4. Finally: *Who that communes with his own conscience, or takes counsel of death bed scenes, will hesitate in the choice between Evangelical Christianity and Unitarianism?*

I am aware that Unitarianism may seem to do well enough, so long as the conscience is asleep, and the world smiles, and death is kept out of remembrance.—But let the case change in either of these respects, and you will see that an exigency has occurred which the system was not designed to meet. What if conscience awake to its appropriate office, and accuse you of your rebellion against God, and force you to look towards the horrors of a coming world;—you may have the best consolations that Unitarianism can furnish offered you, and you will reject them as altogether inadequate, and pant for something which it belongs not to the system to yield. Or suppose again that the cup of pleasure is suddenly taken out of your hands, and a cup of gall substituted in its place;—suppose especially that you are brought to realize that the scenes of your worldly joy are at an end, and that the king of terrors is approaching you on his mysterious and appalling agency;—rely on it, you have made no adequate preparation for an occasion like this, unless you have looked beyond the system of Unitarianism. I do not say that there have not been cases in which individuals have evinced great tranquillity in death, who have openly rejected the atonement of Christ; and so too, I know, there have been those who have openly declared against the *Religion* of Christ in every form, who have breathed out their lives apparently without a chill of apprehension; but while some such instances occur both among Unitarians and Deists, how numerous are the cases in which their sys-

tem utterly fails them in the last hour, and they are left to grope through the dark valley without a ray of consolation! But not so with Evangelical Christianity.—Whatever her votaries may have feared in respect to the genuineness of their own experience, I venture to say that the instance never occurred in which the soul that had believed in Christ's atonement, doubted in the last hour whether that were a sure foundation. It stands like the rock of ages; and the billows of death beat around it in vain.

Are you, my young friend, amidst your dreams of thoughtlessness, half inclined to adopt the Unitarian system as your creed? Before you do it, reflect that you have within your bosom a conscience, which, though it slumbers now, will ere long awake and shew itself a minister of wrath, and will refuse to be pacified by any thing short of that atoning blood which Unitarianism rejects. While the world turns from you its dark side, and the grave seems hid in a distant futurity, you may be ready to ask yourself "What more consolation do I need than Unitarianism furnishes?" But forget not the evil days that are to come;—days of disappointment, days of calamity, and especially the dark day of death, in which nothing but the grace of an Almighty Saviour will be sufficient to sustain you. Make provision for the future by embracing the system of Evangelical truth. Receive it cordially and practically, and I will have no apprehension either for your safety or your comfort, though I should see you walking in the midst of trouble, or even writhing in the monster's hands.

## LECTURE VII.

### PRACTICAL CHRISTIANITY CONTRASTED WITH ANTINOMIANISM.

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TITUS II. 11, 12, 13, 14.

*For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men; teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.*

IN CONNEXION WITH

JUDE 4.

— *Ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness.*

The chapter which contains the former of these passages, the Apostle introduces by a series of directions, such as it became an elder minister to address to a younger, and especially to his own son in the faith, in reference to the manner in which he should discharge the ministerial office. He then proceeds in the words just recited to enforce what he had said by an argument



drawn from the influence which Christianity exerts over the heart and life; in connexion with the great object of the Christian's hope, as it is to be realized at the second appearing of Jesus Christ. He distinctly declares that the "grace" which "bringeth salvation," instead of relaxing the obligations of righteousness, confirms them; and supplies motives to a holy life of the most impressive kind: in other words, that we are specially bound to a life of obedience by the consideration that we are hereafter to meet in glory that Saviour who died for the very purpose of "redeeming us from all iniquity," and rendering us "zealous of good works."

The passage which I have read from *Jude* occurs in connexion with an admonition to the Christians whom he was addressing, to "contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered to the saints." As a reason for this admonition he proceeds to say, "There are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation; ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness;" or perverting the most holy truths of the gospel to justify themselves in the most abominable iniquity.

The former part of our text presents to our view *Practical Christianity*: the latter part of it, that perversion of the gospel that is commonly called *Antinomianism*. The design of the discourse then, is to *contrast Practical Christianity with Antinomianism*.

The term *Antinomianism*, strictly speaking, denotes something contrary to the law. A distinct sect bearing the name of Antinomians sprang up on the Continent of Europe a little before the middle of the sixteenth century; but it was in England, and during the protectorate of Cromwell, that they acquired their greatest influence, and were most bold in inculcating and defending

their principles of libertinism. The leading doctrines which they maintained were that, in virtue of the obedience and sufferings of Christ, the law is abrogated as a rule of action ; that no amount of sin which they could commit, could, in any degree, affect their future well-being ; and that it is impossible that the elect should do any thing that is displeasing to God. I am not aware that the Antinomians have any existence at this day as a distinct sect ; and yet there is reason to believe they are scattered here and there through almost every sect. It is only within a few years that they were so numerous and formidable in Great Britain, that the celebrated Andrew Fuller felt himself called upon to vindicate the gospel against their wretched and licentious perversions of it ; and he produced an argument on that occasion which ought to have set them all to looking out for a place in the caves and dens of the earth. I am informed, upon good authority, that it is no uncommon thing, at this day, to meet with this heresy in its most revolting form, in certain parts of our own country : and I ought to add that the sect which have lately sprung up among us under the name of *Perfectionists*, are understood to embrace some of the most offensive of the Antinomian peculiarities. These facts, if there were nothing beyond them, would exempt me, I trust, from a liability to the charge of beating the air, in presenting this subject before you as a topick for publick instruction.

But I acknowledge that I should regard the necessity for discussing this subject as much less than it now is, if the prevalence of Antinomian tendencies did not greatly exceed the direct avowal of Antinomian principles.—The truth is that, as Antinomians are to be found scattered through almost every sect, so Antinomianism combines itself as a leaven of evil with almost every system.

There are good men who, with an honest zeal for God's truth, suffer unguarded expressions sometimes to escape them, which would seem to imply that the liberty of the gospel includes in it a freedom from the obligations of personal holiness. And so too there are bad men who eulogize the gospel, while they continue in sin; and who show clearly enough, without expressing it in words, that they take refuge against the accusations of conscience in the reflection that they belong to the number of the elect, to whom, in virtue of the sacrifice of Christ, there remaineth no condemnation. Good men may become, to some extent, Antinomians in theory, while yet they love God's law; but it is for bad men to reduce the theory to practice, or to exhibit the practice while they professedly discard the theory. In the present discourse I shall consider Antinomianism, not in its more obscure and impalpable forms, as connected with other systems, but as itself constituting a distinct system;—just what its professed advocates have represented it: and in doing so, I shall hope indirectly to aim a blow at all the diversified tendencies to this form of error.

By *Practical Christianity* I mean that system which claims dominion over the whole man, and supplies the elements of a new character; which “teaches us that, denying ungodliness and every worldly lust, we should live soberly, righteously and godly, in this present world;” and that Christ “gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works.” In short, it is Evangelical Christianity contemplated in its practical bearings.

We will contrast these two systems as they stand related to THE DISPENSATION OF GRACE:—

I. TO THE MEANS EMPLOYED :

II. TO THE ENDS ACCOMPLISHED.

I. TO THE MEANS EMPLOYED.

The means employed in the economy of grace may be fairly included in *the agency of the Saviour*, and *the agency of the sinner* ; in other words, in *the mediatorial work of Christ*, and in *a compliance with the terms on which its blessings are offered*.

What then are the bearings of these two systems on *the mediation of Christ*?

1. Antinomianism *contracts its influence* : Practical Christianity *gives it an immeasurable range*.

What, upon the principles of Antinomianism, does the mediation of Christ accomplish? Does it guard the honour of the divine law? Does it harmonize the attributes of the divine character? Does it render God more glorious in the view of the intelligent creation?—Does it minister to the happiness of other worlds, by opening up to them a system of moral beauty and grandeur, upon which they may expatiate with ever fresh delight and ever growing advantage? No, it does nothing of all this; it concerns itself only with man; and even in respect to *him* the work which it proposes to accomplish is but a partial work. Its grand design is to bring to the heart a sense of security;—to make the sinner feel that he is safe from the threatnings of God's law; and where this conviction is once established,—no matter by what means,—the end for which Christ lived and died on earth, and now reigns in Heaven, is regarded as accomplished. In the progress of the discourse, I shall have occasion to show that the provision which the Antinomian finds in the mediation of Christ for the sinner's *justification* is not only at war with God's truth, but



subversive of the whole evangelical economy ; but, for the present, I will admit, if you please, notwithstanding the contradiction which the supposition must involve, that the Antinomian view of redemption provides for the sinner's being completely justified ;—yet what remedial provision, I ask, does it contemplate, for the great moral disease of human nature ? Man is not only obnoxious, as an offender, to the penalty of the divine law, but he has corrupted his way before God, and is the subject of a deep and awful depravity. Inquire of the Antinomian how this latter exigency is to be met,—how pollution is to be removed, and purity to come in its place ;—and if he attempts to answer you, he will probably say that sin can do him no harm ; or perhaps he may talk of an imputed sanctification, and claim that Christians are one with Christ in such a sense that they are perfectly holy in him, however profligate and vile they may be in themselves. The truth is that the system really makes no provision for sanctification ; and if evidence of this were wanting from other sources, it is supplied by the lives of most of those who have practically and thoroughly embraced it.

Now contemplate the mediation of Christ in the light of Practical Christianity, and see how much more extensive is the field on which its influence operates. In the first place, it contemplates *all* the great exigencies of human nature : while it includes the necessary provision for turning away the wrath of God, it also looks to the renovation of the heart : while it secures a title to a holy Heaven, it secures also the qualifications requisite for enjoying it. In short, it meets man just as he is, and transforms him into what he ought to be ; elevating alike his character and his destiny. But then it reaches much farther ;—it maintains the honour of God's law,

and the harmony of his attributes; it brings out the divine character in brighter and lovelier forms to the view of other worlds; and while it justifies the song of the angels at the Redeemer's incarnation, it constitutes a subject into which the angels desire to look, and in the contemplation of which they will advance from glory to glory through eternity.

2. Antinomianism *throws around the mediation of Christ an air of inconsistency*: Practical Christianity *exhibits it as entirely consistent*.

The former renders it inconsistent, the latter consistent, with *the moral government of God*, with *itself*, and with *Scripture*.

Antinomianism exhibits the mediation of Christ as at war with *God's moral government*, and even actually subverting it. The law of God, as it is written on the conscience, and as it is more legibly and fully written in his word, is the grand rule, the only rule, which he has ever prescribed to the intelligent creation; and as this has its foundation in his own infinite perfections, it must be at once perfect and immutable; and of course, as the same Being is the author both of the law and the gospel, it is impossible that the mediation of Christ which constitutes the substance of the gospel, should, in the least degree, impair the authority of the law. But, upon the principles of Antinomianism, the very design for which Christ died was to abrogate the law as a rule of life; and his death was a virtual proclamation to at least a portion of his intelligent creatures, that they are absolved from the obligations of obedience. And hence it is common for Antinomians, taking shelter under a sad perversion of Scripture, to speak of the moral law as a yoke,—a burden too heavy to be borne,—and of those who acknowledge it, as being in a state of ignoble bond-

age,—thus virtually imputing injustice and tyranny to the Lawgiver. And it is scarcely necessary to add that they generally evince as little regard for the law in their lives as by their lips ; and even in the midst of the most high handed rebellion against God, they sometimes triumphantly point to the death of Christ as the price of their liberty to continue in sin. Upon their system, Christ, instead of honouring the law, gained a victory over it ; and in his mediation we contemplate nothing less than a conflict between grace and justice, in which the former came off triumphant, and the latter was trampled in the dust. As God's law is the basis of his moral administration, and as the Antinomian view of Christ's mediatorial work goes to set that law aside, I ask whether God the moral Governour and Christ the Redeemer are not hereby represented as having conflicting interests ; and whether, upon this principle, the claims of the former have not been yielded in a manner that is equivalent to yielding up the throne of the universe ?

Practical Christianity, on the other hand, exhibits the mediation of Christ as in perfect harmony with God's moral government ; nay, as vindicating its claims and sustaining its interests. The violated law makes its demand upon the sinner for the blood of his soul ; and Christ interposes to save him from the curse, and exalt him to glory and honour. The grand obstacle which lay in the way of the sinner's salvation was the dishonour which had been done to the law : this dishonour Christ undertakes to retrieve, actually does retrieve, by his obedience and death ; thus honouring the law, in his mediatorial capacity, both in its penalty and its precept. In consequence of his interposition, God can now be just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly : the sinner

can be saved, and yet the honours of the law remain inviolate. Nay, I venture to say that the mediation of Christ, on the principles of Practical Christianity, sheds new lustre upon the law; for it is an open declaration to the universe that there was no sacrifice which God deemed too expensive to make for its preservation.—Does the Christian then, when he looks at the cross, feel his sense of obligation to the law grow weaker, and is he ready to plead for his continuance in sin that grace may abound? So far from it that the majesty of the law never appears to him so great, or its claims so imperative, or his transgression of it so criminal, as when he contemplates it in that very sacrifice which is designed to deliver him from its curse.

Antinomianism farther exhibits the mediation of Christ as inconsistent with *itself*. The Antinomian, in common with all others who acknowledge the truth of Christianity, professes to regard the mediatorial work of Christ as involving only a benevolent instrumentality; but if the view which he takes of the law be correct, it surely involves more of cruelty than benevolence. For he regards the law as despotick in its claims: he considers it desirable to be free from them; and he triumphs in a professed assurance that the gospel has made him free. If such then be the character of the law, justice required that it should have been repealed; and it was not only unjust but cruel that such a mighty sacrifice should have been required in order to avert the threatened punishment. I say then that the Antinomian view of the mediation of Christ involves a gross self-contradiction: it compliments that as a benevolent measure which, after all, was the most unrighteous and arbitrary infliction which the universe ever witnessed.



Moreover, the mediation of Christ, upon this system, becomes self-contradictory, inasmuch as it professes to provide for the safety of the sinner, while it leaves the elements of misery in his bosom. What is it, think you, that constitutes Hell? I do not pretend to say how much of torture there may be growing out of the external circumstances in which the sinner may be placed; but, rely on it, he carries about with him in his corrupt nature the materials for an undying agony.—There is that within him, which, if not arrested, will rankle, and rage, and subject him to inward torture, so long as he has a being. Now Antinomianism sees in the mediation of Christ provision for the sinner's safety, while yet it recognises no adequate provision for removing the only cause of his danger. It pronounces him free from the guilt of sin, and yet leaves him under the tyranny of his corrupt inclinations. Suppose I were languishing under the power of some fatal disease; and a physician were to stand up before me and declare that I was perfectly secure from all future suffering, while yet he did nothing to arrest my malady;—should I not have reason to say that he was trifling with my misery; that his declaration that I was secure from suffering, and his conduct in leaving my disease to take its course, involved a palpable contradiction? But no greater contradiction surely than the mediation of Christ involves, provided it declares the sinner free from the consequences of his sins, while yet it leaves him the subject of an inherent pollution.

Practical Christianity imparts to the mediation of Christ, in both these respects, a beautiful self-consistency. While she regards it as a scheme of the highest benevolence, she contemplates the law as of such paramount importance to the interests of the universe, and as so

embodying the perfections of its all-wise Author, that she sees no injustice in maintaining it even at such mighty expense; especially as the sacrifice of the Son of God was perfectly voluntary, and was made in view of the glory that should follow. And then again, she views the mediation of Christ as a thoroughly remedial system;—as not merely pronouncing the sinner safe, but as actually securing his safety upon the best of all grounds; as not merely declaring him an heir of Heaven while yet the elements of Hell are in his soul, but in forming within him the temper of Heaven, and thus giving him an inward and rational pledge of future glory. She knows nothing of that wretched mockery of human hopes which separates the justifying righteousness of Christ from the sanctifying influence of his Spirit;—the security of the sinner before God from that “holiness without which” the Apostle declares that “no one can see the Lord.”

I observe, once more, under this head, that Antinomianism exhibits the mediation of Christ as inconsistent, Practical Christianity as consistent, with *the whole tenour of the word of God*. The prophet Isaiah, ages before the Messiah’s advent, predicted of him that He should “magnify the law and make it honourable.”—And when he actually appeared, he held such decisive language as the following:—“Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets; I am not come to destroy but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, till Heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.” What purpose do the Scriptures represent Christ as accomplishing in his *prophetical* character? The Apostle declares that “the grace of God hath appeared to all men, teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we

should live soberly, righteously and godly, in this present world." What is the great end which they connect with his *priestly* office? The Apostle in the same connexion supplies the answer: He "gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works." And wherefore is it that they exhibit him as "*Head* over all things to the church;" as having "ascended up on high, led captivity captive, and given gifts unto men?" It is "for the perfecting of the saints,"—"for the edifying of the body of Christ;" in other words, for conforming them to the perfect standard of God's law. Such is a fair specimen of the testimony of Scripture, in respect to the design and influence of Christ's mediation: and now I ask you whether this testimony is not in perfect accordance with the views of Practical Christianity; whether it is not utterly inconsistent with the views of Antinomianism? If you wished to say, in the most unequivocal language you could command, that Christ's mediation was designed to honour the law, and to enforce the duty, as well as cherish the spirit, of obedience, I ask here, as on a former occasion, could you possibly find language that would be less liable to exception than that which God's word supplies?

3. Antinomianism *represents Christ in his mediatorial character as the minister of sin*: Practical Christianity, *as the minister of holiness*.

It is part of the creed of the Antinomian, not merely that the guilt of the elect was *reckoned* as Christ's, but that it actually *became* his; that there was a literal transfer to his person of all the sins which they ever have committed, or ever shall commit; and that, in this sense, "he bore our sins in his own body upon the tree." It is impossible, upon this supposition, to avoid the idea

that Christ is the greatest sinner in the universe. And besides, what, upon this principle, is the tendency of his work, but to release men from the obligation to holiness, and of course to throw open the floodgates of crime.—Only let the conviction be thoroughly established in the mind of a sinner that he is one of the elect, and that sin can do him no harm,—that the influence of Christ's mediation secures his safety irrespective of his character, and he has for the time a complete opiate to his conscience; and you are not to wonder if his corrupt propensities rise fiercely into action, and betray a giant's strength.

Practical Christianity indeed recognises Christ as "bearing our sins," but in a sense far different from that to which I have just adverted. She contemplates the Saviour as perfectly holy in his human nature; as infinitely holy in his divine nature; and as losing nothing of his holiness in the assumption of the mediatorial office. She contemplates him as bearing the burden of a world's atonement, and yet being a perfectly innocent sufferer; as submitting to be treated as if he were guilty, while yet he was so holy as to deserve and receive the homage of angels. And the purpose for which he humbled himself on earth and for which he is exalted in Heaven, she regards as a perfectly holy purpose;—nothing less than to sustain the great and holy interests of the divine government, and to render men holy, according to their measure, even as God is holy. Is it not true then that, while Antinomianism degrades the Saviour in his mediatorial character by making him the minister of sin, Practical Christianity exalts him by making him, not the minister of grace only, but of holiness also?

Such are the bearings of the two systems on one great part of the instrumentality employed in the dispensation



of grace. We will now see how they stand related to a humbler part of the same instrumentality,—viz, *man's compliance with the terms* on which the blessings of the new covenant are secured to him.

And here I remark in general that Antinomianism leaves the sinner nearly passive in the work of his salvation, while Practical Christianity calls him to vigorous and persevering effort. If you exhort the Antinomian to awake to his duty previous to the time when he supposes his justification to have been made manifest to him, he calmly replies that there is nothing for him to do; for if he is one of the elect, the whole work of his salvation has already been accomplished by Christ; and if he is not one of the elect, nothing that he can do can change his condition for the better. And even after he professes to have received the assurance of his election, he has still the same plea, that Christ's work is a finished work, and that to suppose *he* could render it more perfect were alike arrogant and impious; and as for good works, they savour so much of a legal spirit, that he is kept from the performance of them both by his principles and his dispositions. Accordingly, wherever you find a thorough going Antinomian, you will find a person who does little for the spiritual interests either of himself or of others; and his system supplies him with an apology for being passive; for if there is nothing to do, he surely is justified in doing nothing.

But Practical Christianity has no communion with a spirit of indolence. Her language is—"Strive to enter in at the straight gate." "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." "Labour—for the meat that endureth to everlasting life." "Give diligence to make your calling and election sure." And these injunctions she enforces by the most impressive and affecting consi-

derations. Nor are these considerations unavailing; for every Practical Christian is an active Christian: he was active in first consecrating himself to God; he is still active in cultivating the principle of piety in his own heart, and in promoting the best interests of his fellow men; nor does he expect to be free either from labour or conflict so long as he is in the body. Practical Christianity detracts nothing from the Redeemer's merit; she recognises his death as the price, and the whole price, of man's salvation; but, at the same time, she contemplates man as a moral and responsible agent, and even suspends his salvation on a compliance with the terms she has proposed to him.

But let us contemplate a little in detail some of the Christian graces and virtues, as they appear respectively in the light of the two systems.

1. Antinomianism *recognises no grounds, and supplies no motives, for true repentance*: Practical Christianity *does both*.

Repentance supposes transgression; and transgression takes for granted the existence of a law. Where there is no law, transgression is of course impossible. Or if the law be unreasonable and unjust, so far the violation of it is not sin. Or if it have been repealed and its authority set aside, however just it may be in itself, it has lost its claims upon our obedience, and ceases to be a rule of duty. Now, inasmuch as Antinomianism entirely abolishes the law as a rule of life, so far as respects believers, it is manifestly impossible, upon this ground, that they should ever exercise true repentance; for the reason already mentioned, that, where there is no law, there is no transgression; and where there is no transgression, there is no foundation for repentance.

And as the view which the Antinomian takes of the divine law leaves no *ground* for repentance so far as believers are concerned, so also the view which he takes of the impotence of the sinner, and of the liberty of the Christian, leaves neither the one nor the other with any *motives* to repentance. To the sinner he virtually denies the powers of a moral agent, and will have it that he is moved only as a machine, and that all he can do and all he is required to do, is to wait passively for the putting forth of an almighty hand. Now I ask whether this doctrine does not completely annihilate every motive to true repentance on the part of the sinner?—For even though he might feel that the greatest possible blessings were connected with it, and that it were most desirable to him to repent, yet surely the conviction that he was dependant in such a sense that any efforts he might make in the case would not vary the result, would be a reason, and if the conviction were well founded, a good reason, why he should attempt nothing. And as for the believer, the liberty into which he is supposed to be brought by the gospel, as it precludes the possibility of repentance, though on a different ground from that just adverted to, denies also the necessity of it: of course there is not the shadow of a motive for its exercise. Accordingly you see nothing like the workings of true godly sorrow among this class: and no doubt it is their aversion from the practice that predisposes and prepares them for the rejection of the doctrine.

Practical Christianity at once presents the most solid grounds for repentance, and supplies the most powerful motives to it. She contemplates the law as binding alike upon believers and unbelievers; and in every violation of it, whether in the one class or the other, she sees matter for repentance. When the Antinomian

claims that the believer is absolved from obligation to the law, Practical Christianity asks in reply, from which of all the commandments a good man would wish to be absolved ; which of them is a burden to a truly pious soul ; which of them could be dispensed with without sacrificing the interests of human society ? She asks again, if believers are not under the law as a rule of life, how it is that they are represented in God's word as daily committing sin ; how it is that they are exhorted to love one another from a regard to the law ; and how it is that Christ declared his purpose to establish the law, without intimating that there was one great class to which its authority did not reach ? And as the obligation to repentance arises out of the obligation to obedience, and as the obedience of the believer is at best imperfect and interrupted, Practical Christianity sees good grounds, even in respect to the best of men, for deep and habitual repentance.

And as for the motives which she presents to the discharge of this duty,—nothing could be more urgent or impressive. There is the express command of God requiring repentance. There is the penalty of the law, comprehending a depth of woe, which no finite mind can fathom, that lies against all sin that is unrepented of ; and if you say that this cannot be a motive with the true Christian, inasmuch as he has been delivered from the curse, I answer that, just in proportion as he yields to transgression, he has reason to doubt his claim to the Christian character. There is the encouraging assurance that one of the great purposes of the Redeemer's exaltation is that he may "give repentance to Israel and remission of sins." And more than all, the view which Practical Christianity presents of the sufferings of Christ, endured for the expiation of sins which are truly and



properly ours, makes the strongest appeal to whatever is tender and ingenuous in human nature ; and the heart that relents not—breaks not, when this view is presented, is more unimpressible than the flinty rock.

2. *Antinomianism represents faith in Christ as a mere unaccountable impression : Practical Christianity, as a rational exercise.*

What, in the view of the Antinomian, constitutes the object of saving faith ? It is the simple proposition that he is one of the elect, and that Christ died for him in particular. But surely he does not find this in the word of God ; for that promises eternal life only to a class possessing a certain character ; and an individual, before he can appropriate the promise, must be conscious that the character belongs to him. Upon what grounds then is this proposition received ? Is it possible that it is in every case, or in any case, a matter of direct revelation ? So I suppose the Antinomian will say ; but who beside himself will believe it ? For this supposition necessarily involves the conclusion that the Revelation which God has given us is imperfect ; and that in every conversion that takes place something is added to the sum of the divine revelations, which the Spirit hath long since pronounced complete. But if there be no direct revelation of this fact to the mind by the Spirit of God, then surely the Antinomian's faith is nothing better than an airy fancy. The thought comes over him that he is one of the elect, and straightway he believes that he *is* one of the elect ; and with no better evidence of the fact than is furnished by this waking dream, he steadily perseveres in the belief of it ; and if conscience sometimes awakens within him gloomy apprehensions, he regards them as the temptations of the adversary who is ever watchful

to interrupt his peace, and thus throws the inward monitor back into as deep a lethargy as ever.

Very different is the view of faith as it is presented by Practical Christianity. The object of it is revealed truth;—the great truth that “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life.” This truth, while it is so clear that none need mistake it, bears the unequivocal seal of God’s authority. In receiving it therefore, the Practical Christian acts in accordance with the dictates of Reason; for what higher evidence can be presented of any truth than the testimony of God? But faith is not mere intellectual assent; it involves a personal reliance on Christ for salvation; for “with the heart,” says the Apostle, ‘man believeth unto righteousness;’ and how reasonable is it, how entirely in accordance with the moral constitution of man, that the truths which the mind receives should exert an influence upon the affections. Whether therefore faith be considered in reference to the intellect or the heart, in respect to its nature or its object, you cannot fail to perceive that it is in the highest degree a rational exercise; an exercise worthy both of our intellectual and moral nature.

3. Antinomianism *represents love to God as nothing better than mere favouritism in view of our being his supposed favourites: Practical Christianity contemplates it as a high and holy, and, in one sense, disinterested, affection.*

The Antinomian scarcely contemplates God in any other view than as his personal Benefactor. His character as a moral Governour, as we have already seen, he completely loses sight of; and his thoughts concerning him even as an all-gracious Father, and an all-compas-

sionate Redeemer, are few and unimpressive, except as they relate to the regards which He is supposed to exercise toward himself. He loves God not for what he is, but solely for what he has done; not for what he has done for the world, but for having made *himself* his peculiar favourite. Thus the love which he bears to the divine Being is entirely independent of his essential character.

But the Practical Christian, while he regards God as an infinite Benefactor, and cherishes the most devout gratitude towards him for his numberless favours, regards him also as the Benefactor of other beings and of other worlds; and more than that, as the infinitely holy God, the fountain of all moral excellence; and in this latter view of his character particularly he feels the most cordial complacency. He can appropriate the language of inspiration in its legitimate import, and say, "O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his *name* together!" Apart from all the blessings he receives from God, and all the relations he sustains to him,—nay, apart from all the relations which Jehovah sustains to the universe, he delights in contemplating his absolute perfections: he has an eye to discern the beauty of holiness, as well as a heart to receive the impression of gratitude.

4. Antinomianism *represents love to man as the operation of a mere selfish spirit: Practical Christianity, as the operation of an expansive good will, or of a cordial complacency in moral excellence.*

Toward the mass of the world Antinomianism does not even *profess* any benevolent regard. It sees the multitude thronging the way to death; but it never puts forth a hand to arrest them, because it is only a divine agency that is adequate to the work. It has no prayers to offer in their behalf, lest peradventure it should be found to

have made intercession for those whom God has determined to pass by. It has no tears to shed over their ruin, because it has been decreed by God, and it is not for them to weep, but to rejoice, in the accomplishment of his purposes. Hence it is not uncommon for them to speak not only with perfect calmness, but with manifest exultation, of the perdition that awaits the ungodly; and as for those who venture to oppose their system, they are looked upon with contempt and treated with abuse and scurrility. And even the love which this system inspires toward Christians *as such*, is nothing better than mere attachment to party: it is not the image of Christ which draws forth their affections, but the image of themselves;—a supposed agreement with them in their peculiar opinions. And the tie which actually binds them together is not so strong, but that it often breaks amidst the collisions of personal interest; and they who claim to be the special favourites of God treat each other as if they had entirely forfeited the confidence of their fellow men.

Practical Christianity looks with a spirit of benevolence upon *all* men. To decide whether she shall deal out bread to the hungry and raiment to the naked, or perform any other kind office toward the children of want, she never inquires to what denomination they belong other than the denomination of the wretched.—And the moral ruin of man she contemplates with deep and active concern. She believes indeed most fully that none will finally be saved, except those whom God “did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son;” but then she remembers that God’s secret purpose is not her rule of action, and she offers up her prayers and puts forth her efforts for the salvation of sinners indiscriminately, with as much interest and as much earnestness



as if the doctrine of election had never been revealed. Did not the Apostle declare in the very epistle in which he has most triumphantly vindicated this doctrine, that his "heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel" was, 'that they might be saved?' And did not a greater than Paul, even the Redeemer of the world, weep in view of the approaching ruin of a city, the inhabitants of which had nearly filled up the measure of their iniquity? This is the genuine spirit of Practical Christianity: she weeps for misery as such; and she would not that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. And while her benevolent regards go forth toward all men, her affections centre with peculiar warmth upon the true disciples of Christ; for in them she sees reflected the Redeemer's image. Tell her that even an enemy is experiencing sufferings which it is in her power to relieve, and instantly she is on the alert to impart her sympathy and aid. Let her see the least trace of moral excellence in a fellow creature, and though it be associated with ever so much of external degradation, there is a chord in her heart which instinctively vibrates at the discovery. Is not the spirit of Practical Christianity the spirit of angels? Is not the temper which Antinomianism cherishes, worthy of the fiends of darkness?

Such are the bearings of Practical Christianity and Antinomianism upon the means employed in the dispensation of grace. We proceed now to contrast them as they stand related to

## II. THE ENDS ACCOMPLISHED.

I am well aware that both Reason and Scripture lead to the conclusion that the mediatorial dispensation reaches in its influence much beyond our present limited conceptions; that it accomplishes many great and lofty ends

in the divine government which will be revealed to us when our faculties shall have reached a higher maturity; and that other worlds than our own are destined to rejoice in it forever, if not as a remedial system for themselves, yet as a medium of the richest divine manifestation. I shall limit myself, however, on the present occasion, to a brief view of *the happiness of man* and *the glory of God*, as the great ends which are proposed and accomplished by the economy of grace.

What then are the bearings of these systems upon *the happiness of man*?

1. Antinomianism *is unfriendly to human happiness, as it makes no adequate provision for the legitimate exercise of the faculties*: Practical Christianity favours it, by making full provision for their exercise.

It results from the constitution which God has given us that a state of inaction is inconsistent with a state of real enjoyment. These noble faculties were designed to be employed; and he who suffers the rust that is induced by a habit of indolence to come over them, as he contravenes the design of his Creator, of course makes war upon his own happiness. But it is not enough, in order to secure our enjoyment, that our faculties should be *employed*; they must be *legitimately* employed;—employed upon suitable objects and in a proper manner.—If the sluggard who is always calling out for “a little more slumber, a little more folding of the hands to sleep,” finds nothing in *his* experience that deserves the name of happiness, surely the wretch who is active in doing mischief, who perverts his faculties to the injury of his fellow men and his own ultimate ruin, must be still more remote from any thing like true enjoyment. But a habit of well directed activity renders an individual

happy in any circumstances. It furnishes an antidote against many of the evils of life; especially those which result from idleness and crime. It preserves the faculties in a vigorous and healthful state. It keeps the conscience void of offence. In a word, it exalts man's whole nature, and draws down upon him the special blessing of Almighty God.

Now we have already seen that it is the tendency of Antinomianism to make man feel that he has nothing to do, or else to encourage him to do wrong; while Practical Christianity sets before him a mighty work, and supplies the most powerful considerations to induce him to engage in it: nay, she actually brings his faculties into vigorous exercise, and keeps him active in doing God's will so long as he is in the body. It results of course from the laws of our nature that the latter system is favourable, the former, unfavourable, to human happiness. Behold the Antinomian folding his arms and pleading that he has nothing to do; or else boldly committing iniquity, and pleading that nothing that he can do, as one of God's elect, is to be considered sinful! Behold the Practical Christian labouring with persevering diligence;—not only working out his own salvation with fear and trembling, but forming and executing great and noble designs to promote the best interests of his fellow men! See how he clings to God's law as a rule of action, and how cheerfully he denies himself and takes up the cross, rather than abandon it; and then judge for yourself which of these two is the more happy man.—Is it the drone who is at home only upon his pillow,—the wretch who is at home only in scenes of crime; or is it not rather he who is at home in the walks of self-denied activity and honourable usefulness?

2. Antinomianism *leaves in the human bosom the sources of unhappiness that naturally belong to man as a sinner* : Practical Christianity *removes them*.

The inward sources of misery to which I here refer are a corrupt nature and a guilty conscience ; and so long as the one is unsanctified and the other unpacified, it is impossible that true happiness should dwell in the heart. Tell me, ye who can speak from experience, what more galling yoke ye could come under than that of your own corrupt inclinations ? Let the sensualist say if there is not misery from the prevalence of his unbridled appetites, whether he is permitted to gratify them or not. Let the man who yields to a revengeful and malignant temper say whether he does not sometimes find not merely a tempest, but a hell, within his bosom. And let the creature of habitual selfishness say whether the indulgence of *this* spirit does not often make him wretched ; and whether it is not incompatible with that enjoyment which his judgment and conscience approve. And if there is misery in the indulgence of evil affections, so also there is a sting in a guilty conscience. Let any amount of external evil befall an individual, and if he has a conscience void of offence, he can be tranquil and even happy notwithstanding ; but let conscience witness against him, and his courage and his comfort wither away together under her accusations. What made Herod tremble with apprehension that John the Baptist had risen from the dead ? What made Belshazzar turn pale, when he saw the mysterious hand coming forth and writing upon the wall ? What made Judas go out in the anguish of his spirit and commit suicide ? In each case it was a guilty conscience ; and it is the same which often fills the sinner with terroure, and sometimes prompts to the most desperate acts, at this day.—



As this principle or faculty makes part of man's moral constitution, it is not easy to neutralize its power ; and though it may be temporarily put to sleep, it will sooner or later awake with the strength of a giant. Even the man who glories most in his iniquity and infidelity, is liable, at any moment, to find himself bereaved of all his triumph, and writhing under the inflictions of this inward avenger.

But if such are the sources of unhappiness which belong to man's sinful nature, let us see what is the influence which these two systems respectively exert in removing or perpetuating them. Have we not already seen that Antinomianism makes no adequate provision for purifying the heart ; that, on the contrary, it presents the strongest inducements that a corrupt disposition can ask, to surrender itself to the power of sinful habit?—And as for the internal monitor,—I know that the antidote which it furnishes to her operations would be altogether effectual, if it were not for the inherent difficulty of her being bribed ; for it tells her not only that the Christian has no sins to account for, but that he is incapable of committing any ; but trifle with her as you will, administer opiates to her as you may, and it is more than likely that she will sometimes rise upon you in the majesty of rebuke : the deep mist of error by which she is surrounded will so far pass away, that she will recognise God's perfect rule of judgment, and will bring on a fearful trembling of the heart, even where there is a creed professed whose legitimate tendency is to exclude remorse altogether. The man who believes that he commits no sin, and that he is incapable of sinning, believes a lie ; and he believes it against so much evidence that his faith will sometimes almost certainly falter ; and, in every such case, he is of course left to

the mercy of a guilty conscience. But have we not seen that Practical Christianity removes both these causes of unhappiness;—that while she delivers the soul from the tyranny of its own lusts, and re-enstamps it with the divine image, she restores peace to the conscience in the only legitimate way, by sprinkling it with the peace-speaking blood of the Redeemer? Is not Antinomianism then the enemy, Practical Christianity the friend, of human happiness?

3. Antinomianism *exhibits a view of man's relations which is far less favourable to happiness than that which is presented by Practical Christianity.*

What, upon Antinomian principles, is the all absorbing relation which the Christian sustains to *God*? It is that of a beneficiary to a benefactor. And what are the benefits which this relation proposes to secure? Why simply a sense of personal safety. And at what expense is this benefit secured? At the expense of bringing dishonour upon the divine character, and sapping the foundation of the divine government. Surely then, though I may contemplate God as my Benefactor, yet it must detract mightily from the interest with which I regard his benefits, if he has become my Benefactor at the expense of drawing a dark cloud over his infinite perfections.

But the Practical Christian contemplates God not only as a Benefactor but as a moral Governour; and so far from viewing the two characters as opposed to each other, he regards them as perfectly harmonious. In yielding obedience to God as a moral Governour, he fulfils the great law of his being, and preserves in harmony the various principles of his nature. In the blessings which he receives from the divine hand he recognises indeed sovereign grace, but grace exercised in con-

sistency with wisdom, and holiness and truth. Is it not as truly a blessing to be a subject of God's government, as to be an heir of his salvation?

Need I say that there is a corresponding difference in the relation which the believer sustains to the *Lord Jesus Christ*, as viewed in the light of the two systems? Both of them indeed professedly recognise Christ in the character of a Redeemer, and the Christian as one who has been redeemed; but while they admit the same language, they ascribe to it a very different import.—How has Christ become my Redeemer on the principles of Antinomianism? He has taken my sins upon himself in such a sense that they have become literally his own; and has imparted his righteousness to me in such a sense that it has become literally *my* own. He has purchased for me by his death, freedom from the obligation of God's law; in other words, the liberty of sinning; in other words still, the privilege of wounding my own soul. He declares to me indeed that I have nothing to fear in respect to the future, and yet my own consciousness assures me that my inclinations are as perverse as ever; that my heart is like a troubled sea, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. What then though I may call Jesus my Saviour,—yet does not my heart feel that there is much less of endearment in the name, than if I could recognise him as my soul's physician? And can I contemplate his character with the same delight, as if I were not compelled to regard him as an actual sinner in virtue of the part which he bears in my redemption?

Practical Christianity invests this relation with a far different and far deeper interest. When she calls Christ my Redeemer, and me one of his ransomed, she means incomparably more than it has ever entered my heart to conceive. He has borne the curse of the law in my be-

half, while yet he has remained entirely sinless. He has made provision for my sanctification, not by assuming my pollution, or imputing to me his holiness, but by giving his Spirit to work in me both to will and to do, causing me to work out my salvation with fear and trembling. He honours me by employing my own humble agency in his service ; and thus exalting me into a blessed co-operation with himself in the accomplishment of his mediatorial designs. May I not then lift up my heart to him as my Redeemer with unutterable thankfulness and joy ? But could it be so, ought it to be so, if I viewed Christ only in the light of Antinomianism ?

Let me add that the relation which Christians sustain to *each other*, as disciples of the same Master, fellow heirs of the same salvation, becomes quite a different matter as viewed in reference to the one system or the other. The happiness to be derived from Christian fellowship must depend chiefly on the dispositions and feelings of those who are the subjects of it. There may indeed be a strong party attachment where there is no real Christian sympathy ; but the fellowship of saints cannot exist where there is not the hallowed bond of true piety ; and just in proportion as the graces of the Spirit abound in the heart, will the communion of sanctified souls be a source of joy. Now inasmuch as Antinomianism leaves man with all his native and acquired selfishness, and Practical Christianity eradicates it and brings in its place an expansive and generous spirit ; as Antinomianism cherishes pride, and bitterness and malignity, and Practical Christianity crucifies them all, and brings into exercise the opposite graces ; as Antinomianism will have it that the Christian has nothing to do inasmuch as Christ has done all, and therefore has



no occasion to avail himself of fraternal sympathy and aid, while Practical Christianity maintains that he has a great work devolved upon him, and that he is bound to be a fellow-helper with others unto the kingdom of God ; I say in view of all these considerations, is it not manifest that the former lays no foundation, the latter a complete foundation, for Christian fellowship ? The fellowship of Antinomians is not the fellowship of saints : it is a bond of selfish attachment, not of Christian love, by which they are united ; and the fruits of such a fellowship correspond with the reigning principle by which it is animated. The fellowship of Practical Christians is the fellowship of hearts that have been cast in the same heavenly mould ; and its fruits are love, peace, joy,—all that can elevate the character, and delight the heart, of the Christian.

4. Antinomianism *connects far less enjoyment than Practical Christianity with the prospect of Heaven.*

Admitting that the principles of Antinomianism, when practically adopted, were not inconsistent with the attainment of Heaven,—yet, what is there in Heaven, as this system represents it, to constitute a legitimate object of strong desire ? Say you that it will be delightful to dwell in the presence of Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant and of God the Judge and Father of all ? But if either the Father or the Son possesses the character which Antinomianism attributes to him,—if the Father has consented to part with the honours of his throne in virtue of the mediation of Christ, and if Christ, in assuming the office of Mediator, has also assumed the character of a sinner, where I ask would be the fulness of joy in dwelling at God's right hand ? Do you say that in Heaven there will be perfect freedom from sin ? But the Antinomian will have it that he is perfectly free

from sin on earth : of course the change from earth to Heaven could not, in this respect, involve any essential improvement of his condition. True indeed he is *not* free from sin, as he claims to be ; he has no relish for holy enjoyments ; and as Heaven is a place of perfect holiness, it is impossible that he should have any real satisfaction in an intelligent anticipation of it. The truth is that his views of Heaven are altogether indefinite : he contemplates it merely as a place of happiness, without analyzing the ingredients of which its joys are to be composed ; and certainly if he take his idea of Heaven from what passes in his own bosom,—if he suppose that the enjoyments which it offers are consistent with that selfish spirit which his system is so well adapted to foster, and to which he necessarily yields in practically embracing the system, it would seem that even the certainty of reaching it could not furnish an occasion for any very high or rational enjoyment.

But how different are the views of Heaven which are taken by the Practical Christian ! *He* rejoices in the prospect of dwelling in the presence of his God and Redeemer ; and well he may ;—for the character which they bear is perfectly glorious ; the work which they have performed is deservedly the admiration of the holy universe. He rejoices in the prospect of the perfect holiness of Heaven ; and well he may ;—for sin is his greatest burden ; and his most earnest desire is that he may be holy, even as God is holy. When he contemplates the employments of Heaven as they are described in God's word, he finds that he has a heart to engage in them ; when he thinks of the new song that trembles on the lips of the ransomed, he finds his own spirit already attuned to the melodies of redemption : when the objects that are to occupy the thoughts and affections of

the redeemed forever rise up before him, they are the very objects in the contemplation of which he finds, even now, his highest enjoyment. Is it strange then that the thought of Heaven should kindle joy in the bosom of the Practical Christian? Is it strange that the Antinomian should anticipate Heaven with comparative indifference? But

5. Antinomianism *trifles with human happiness by exciting hopes which can never be realized*: Practical Christianity promotes it by giving ample security for the fulfillment of all her promises.

Antinomianism tells the sinner that he is safe, merely because some unaccountable impression has come over him that he is one of the elect; and, upon the strength of this impression, bids him cast out all fear, and rest in the conviction that, let his life be what it may, he shall finally reach Heaven. It distinctly assures him that he has nothing to do to secure his salvation; and though he walks in the way of transgressors, it bids him go on his way rejoicing. But if God's word is true, Antinomianism in all this testifies falsely. The Bible declares that "except a man be born of the Spirit, he cannot see the kingdom of God;" and it promises "glory and honour and immortality" only to a "patient continuance in well doing;" while it denounces "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil." If then God's word be the standard of truth, Antinomianism furnishes an opiate to the conscience, when the conscience ought to be awake; it proclaims "peace and safety," while the Bible is talking of "sudden destruction;" it points with great confidence towards Heaven, and yet leaves the sinner to fall blindfold into the pit. Is not this trifling with human happiness? Is it not the very mockery of human hopes?

But Practical Christianity never deals in delusions.—She tells the sinner that his only safety is in exercising repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and in persevering to the end of life in a course of holy obedience. She assures him that any thing short of this—be it what it may—leaves him to the stern exactions of justice,—to the punishment which his sins have merited. And in all this she is justified to the letter by the infallible declarations of the Bible. She not only points upward to Heaven, but she points out the way that conducts thither; and that way is so plain that the way-faring man need not err therein; and those who do not reach Heaven will find that it is because they have refused to walk in it. Practical Christianity indeed awakens high hopes; but as God's testimony can be relied on, she fulfills them all. Antinomianism awakens high hopes also; but the same infallible testimony has rendered it equally certain that they will all fail when God taketh away the soul.

The other end accomplished by the dispensation of grace is *the glory of God*, or the manifestation of the divine character. How do these two systems bear upon this mighty end?

1. Antinomianism *opposes the glory of God by virtually discharging men from his service*: Practical Christianity *promotes it by keeping all their faculties under contribution*.

There is a sense indeed in which all men, in common with all created existence, glorify God by a law of their being. The heavens declare his glory, as they manifest his wisdom, power and goodness; and surely man, in his physical, intellectual and moral constitution, is a much higher specimen of God's handy work, and of course shows forth his glory in a proportionally higher



degree. But there is another sense in which man is capable of glorifying God,—is required to glorify him ;—I mean by employing his faculties as a moral agent in his Creator's service. How would a child confer the highest honour upon an affectionate and revered parent ? Not surely by disobeying his commands and declining his service, but by making his will a law, and endeavouring, so far as possible, to please him in all things. In like manner, whoever would glorify God, must consecrate all his faculties and affections to the service of God. But Antinomianism releases the Christian from the obligation to do this ; and more than that, discourages him from attempting it, by virtually depriving him of his moral agency ; while Practical Christianity holds up before him continually his obligation to glorify God both in his body and spirit. The angels in Heaven glorify him by their swift obedience to his commandments : the Practical Christian on earth glorifies him in a similar, though far humbler, manner ; but the Antinomian dishonours him by virtually declaring that his commandments are grievous.

2. Antinomianism *obscures the divine glory by making void the law* : Practical Christianity *illustrates it by establishing the law*.

The law is the standard of moral rectitude, not only for this world but for all worlds, and even for the Creator Himself. It is no arbitrary standard which might have been adopted or not in consistency with Jehovah's perfections, but it is just such a rule of action as his perfections required ; and any thing different, we may safely say, would have rendered his administration imperfect, and destroyed his character as a moral Governour. And the law is not only consistent with the moral attributes of God,—was not only required by them, but it

brings them out in living and palpable manifestation. Here the justice, the holiness, the goodness, the wisdom, of God, strike the mind far more impressively than when they are contemplated merely in their abstract relations. But Antinomianism would dash in pieces this mirror in which the moral character of Jehovah is reflected through the creation. By absolving a portion of God's intelligent creatures from the obligation to obedience, it virtually annihilates the law altogether ; for it declares that it is not worthy to be a universal standard of moral action. But Practical Christianity respects all the claims of God as a moral Governour. She sees the law perfectly honoured in every part of the dispensation of grace : Of course she preserves all the moral attributes of God as they are exhibited in it ; but what becomes of them in view of a system which pours dishonour upon the law, and virtually stamps it as an arbitrary and oppressive enactment ?

3. Antinomianism *tarnishes the glory of God by exhibiting a revolting discordancy among his perfections* : Practical Christianity *secures it by exhibiting his perfections in perfect harmony.*

You cannot contemplate for a moment the bearings of Antinomianism upon the essential character of God, without perceiving that it throws his perfections into disproportionate manifestation, and even into conjunctions of hostility. It exalts for instance the divine goodness into an undue relative pre-eminence in reference to one part of the human family, and the divine justice in reference to another ; or rather it causes goodness to degenerate into an unreasonable partiality, and justice into an arbitrary vindictiveness. And thus it not only destroys the infinite proportion of the divine attributes by a most unwarrantable distortion of them, but places them

in an attitude of decided opposition to each other; at the same time that it entirely overshadows God's infinite holiness by contending for impunity to sin. But Practical Christianity brings out the moral character of God in perfect proportions. While she exalts each of his perfections in the highest possible degree, she maintains an entire harmony among the whole. Her designs are indeed accomplished at an amazing expense, but not at the expense of any one of the divine attributes. Mercy and truth, righteousness and peace, are harmoniously blended; and while each is sustained in all its majesty, each becomes more attractive from being contemplated in such glorious combination.

With a few reflections such as the view we have taken of this subject naturally suggests, I shall conclude the discourse.

1. Our subject teaches us that *Antinomianism is a distorted and partial view of the Christian system.*

As it distorts the moral character of God into an unnatural and unlovely shape, and as the dispensation of grace as well as essential religion, has its foundation in God's moral perfections, it necessarily follows that the whole system of religion suffers a proportional distortion. Take for instance the Scripture doctrine of election—What is it as it lies in the creed of the Antinomian, but an expression of unreasonable and capricious favouritism; and what is its legitimate tendency, but to encourage a spirit of pride and presumption? The doctrine of Christ's mediation—What does this imply but that his death was an unreasonable and cruel measure which the exigency of the case did not require; or that, having interposed in a controversy between God and man, he has settled it at the expense of yielding to man the great point in controversy between them,—whether or not the

authority of God's law should be maintained? The doctrine of justification—what else is it than a revelation of God's eternal decree that Christ's righteousness should be ours in such a sense as to render us actually blameless in his sight? And what else is faith in Christ than a belief of this absurd proposition? What is human depravity but a quality for which we are in no wise accountable? And what is efficacious grace, but the acting of Almighty Power upon a mere machine? Indeed there is not a doctrine of the Bible which does not well nigh lose its identity in becoming incorporated with the creed of the Antinomian.

And while Antinomianism sadly perverts the Christian system, it exhibits only a *partial* view of it. Admit that it teaches the doctrine of the grace of God that bringeth salvation,—yet it leaves out of view the law of God requiring obedience. Admit that it teaches the doctrine of justification by the righteousness of Christ,—yet what provision does it make for the renovation of the heart? Admit that it inculcates the necessity of faith in the Redeemer—yet does it not virtually absolve from the obligation to good works, without which the Apostle declares faith to be dead? It not only separates things in the Christian system which God has joined together, but casts away an important part of divine truth, as if it were nothing better than the rubbish of an exploded theology.

2. We see in the review of our subject that *Antinomianism is nearly related to some other dangerous systems of error.*

Take for instance the system of Pelagianism, which maintains the doctrine of justification by works,—though this system seems at first view to be the exact opposite of Antinomianism, yet a moment's reflection will satisfy



you that there is much ground that is common to both ; and that their practical tendencies are, to a great extent, the same. They unite in the doctrine that faith makes void the law ; though the uses which they make of this doctrine are far different ; the Antinomian maintaining that the obligation of the law has ceased,—the Pelagian, that we are not justified by faith alone. Nevertheless there is, as I have intimated, a striking similarity in their ultimate results. The Antinomian will tell you that he earnestly wishes to be a good man, and that it is not his own fault if he is not so, as the work of his salvation is entirely of God ; while the Pelagian will tell you of the native goodness of his heart, and the meritorious doings of his life. But do you not perceive that the wishes of the Antinomian to be good, and the actual goodness claimed by the Pelagian, indicate substantially the same spirit,—a spirit of pharisaic pride and self-righteousness ? And then again, the Antinomian who considers himself justified, though he spurns at the idea of glorying in good works, yet actually glories in being one of the elect, as if that, after all, involved the idea of personal merit ; while the Pelagian, rejecting with heart-felt reprobation the doctrine of election, glories not less in having *made himself* a favourite of Heaven. Thus you see in each the heart of the Pharisee. By different and apparently opposite means they arrive at the same practical result.

Nor is the resemblance less striking between Antinomianism and one form of Universalism. The Antinomian believes that the death of Christ sustains such a relation to the law, that the law has no longer any demands upon the elect, and that no amount of ungodliness and crime can endanger their salvation. The Universalist of the kind to which I here refer, maintains that,

as the fall of Adam brought condemnation to all, so the death of Christ, being the literal payment of a debt due to divine justice from the whole human family, not only brings all into a salvable state but actually secures their salvation, independently of any agency of their own.—Neither Universalism nor Antinomianism leaves the sinner with any thing to do: the grand difference between them is, that the former secures salvation to all; the latter, only to the elect.

3. Our subject *suggests the origin of Antinomian tendencies, and the means of counteracting them.*

I had occasion to remark in the commencement of the discourse that, while bad men only can be thoroughly practical Antinomians, good men may evince, and frequently have evinced, in no small degree, Antinomian tendencies. Not that Antinomianism in any form, or in the least degree, is to be considered harmless; for the least that it does is to mar the proportion and diminish the efficiency of Christian character; but that good men may hold some views which, to say the least, legitimately result in Antinomianism, admits of no question. It is scarcely necessary to say that, so far as true Christians are led at all into this error, it is from causes quite different from those in which the error originates with the ungodly.

Wherever you find an individual who gives evidence of true piety exhibiting Antinomian tendencies, you will, if I mistake not, always find that he holds in peculiar abhorrence that system which would detract aught from the glory of the Redeemer's work by allowing a particle of merit to the creature. In opposing this system, and in defending the doctrine of sovereign grace in the salvation of man, he surely has all Scripture on his side; but in his eagerness to keep clear of one species

of error, he gets, to say the least, too close upon the confines of another ; and in his zeal to magnify God's grace, he uses sweeping expressions which would seem to imply that he had cut loose from the law ; while yet, after all, his delight is in the law of the Lord after the inner man. And while such is the origin of this tendency in good men, it is no doubt greatly assisted in many cases by an inattentive perusal of Scripture ; by neglecting to compare one portion of it with another, and especially by adhering to the literal meaning of certain terms, which were designed to have only a figurative application. It is a jealousy for God's truth and God's honour which betrays the good man, so far as he is betrayed, into this system of error.

But such is not the reason why the careless and ungodly become Antinomians. The reason is that they have a "carnal mind" which 'is enmity against God ; is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.' The whole current of their inclinations contravenes the great designs of God's moral government ; and hence they are predisposed to find apologies for their disobedience and rebellion. And the system of error which we have now been contemplating supplies them with an apology, which, if it be admitted, supersedes the necessity of any other. And does not the history of human nature prove that it is easy to believe what we wish to believe ? If then the sinner in his heart is opposed to the moral government of God, is not this the best possible preparation for the reception of the doctrine that the law has lost its authority in respect to the elect, and for believing that he is himself one of the privileged number ?

Now how shall these tendencies to Antinomianism, whether in good or bad men, be successfully resisted ?

I answer, by holding up before them the truths of the gospel in their proper connexions and practical bearings. Let no minister fear to set forth God's law in the extent of its claims and the majesty of its sanctions, lest he should thereby incur the odium of being a legal preacher. Let him show both to saint and sinner that every violation of the law is sin; and that each, as a moral agent, is accountable for every sin he commits to the great Lawgiver and Judge. Let him preach the doctrines of grace in all their fulness, and richness and glory; but let him preach them as doctrines designed and adapted to form in man a holy temper; and let him show from the very constitution of the gospel that any system which perverts them to a different end, is necessarily and essentially a system of error. And finally, let him appeal to the different practical effects which these doctrines produce when preached in their proper connexions, and when exhibited in a divorced and insulated form, and show how, in the one case, the Christian character is either not formed at all or grows up to a dwarfish deformity;—how, in the other, it rises in beautiful proportions, exhibiting all the virtues and graces of the gospel. Far be it from me to assert that this instrumentality will of itself root out the Antinomian tendencies of the human heart:—nevertheless it is God's appointed means for accomplishing this end; and in the hands of his Spirit we may confidently expect that it will prove effectual.

4. Our subject teaches us that *the spirit of Antinomianism is the spirit of the whole unrenewed world.*

What is it that distinguishes man previous to his renovation, but a disrelish for God's commandments,—a reluctance to submit to his authority? And what is it that is accomplished for man *in* his renovation, but that



his rebellious temper is subdued, and he is brought to delight in the law of the Lord? And what is Antinomianism but this very spirit which, previous to regeneration, constitutes the ruling temper of the heart? Let no unrenewed sinner then say that this subject has conveyed no admonition that is applicable to *him*; inasmuch as he is not only no Antinomian, but sees in the system nothing but absurdity. Take heed that you be not deceived. Antinomianism is an insinuating and slippery thing; and like a serpent in a bed of roses, it may lie hid in a system of doctrine in which you may discern nothing but the full features of an established orthodoxy. But be your system of doctrine what it may, certain it is that you have an Antinomian heart, if you have an unrenewed heart; and this will be enough to sustain against you the charge of having been an Antinomian in the most fearful sense, at the great day.—Hear then as for your life, when I call upon you to yield up that rebellious spirit, and enter cordially into the service of your Lawgiver and Lord.

Finally: *How much both of beauty and power belongs to Practical Christianity!*

As a system of truth, it is characterized by perfect harmony in all its parts and all its bearings; and in its results, it secures all the great ends proposed by the sublimest economy which Infinite Wisdom ever devised. See what Practical Christianity has already done for the world, and say whether she is not to be greeted as a good angel from the world above. Behold how many fountains of sorrow she has dried up, and how many fountains of joy she has unsealed! Behold her appropriating the world as her field, and going forth with a heart that beats to every form of human wo, and a hand open to dispense blessings of every description! And though

the work that she has set herself to accomplish is only begun, she has done enough to constitute a pledge that she will do the whole ; that she will never rest from her labours till the world has been reclaimed from the dominion of the curse, and the last gem has been set in the Mediator's crown. Let Antinomianism go to sleep and dream that there is nothing for her to do, inasmuch as God is pledged to do it all ; but let her know that she will ere long awake from her slumbers to a scene of ignominy and wailing. Meanwhile let Practical Christianity wax bolder and stronger in her efforts to renovate the world and glorify God ; and as God's word is true, to her will belong the honour of having carried the news of salvation, and raised the Redeemer's standard, among all the nations.

I address many who, by profession, are Practical Christians. And what better can I do than exhort you to abound more and more in all works of faith and labours of love ? First of all, keep your hearts with all diligence. Labour for your own sanctification not merely as a matter of personal comfort, nor yet merely because God requires it, but that you may the more effectually aid the sanctification of your fellow men. And then fulfil all the duties connected with your various relations with fidelity and alacrity. You are the head of a family—see to it that you look to the interests of the soul as well as the body ; and endeavour, by God's grace, to become the instrument of salvation to those whom he has made dependant upon you. You are a member of the church—let your conversation be such as becometh the gospel of Christ ; such as you may hope will impress others with the value of true Christianity, and even seal the lips of the infidel and the scoffer.—God has put at your disposal a share—it may be a large

share—of the bounties of his providence—forget not that in doing this, he has only constituted you a steward, and that ere long he will require of you a steward's account. Distribute liberally and cheerfully to the necessities of your fellow creatures; use the world as not abusing it; and you will thereby convert the corruptible treasures of earth into the imperishable treasures of Heaven. God has given you influence in society—it may be he has elevated you above most of your fellow men—see that you use that influence for his honour, and for their benefit. In short, realize habitually that God's claims are upon you to labour in his service to the extent of your ability. Keep your eye fixed upon the Son of God, not only as the Lord your Righteousness and the Lord your Strength, but as a perfect model of consistent and self-denied activity. Regard it a light thing, or rather account it a blessed privilege, to bear the cross in the cause of Him, who bled on the cross to save you from Hell. While you take heed that the materials which should constitute the superstructure are not placed as the foundation,—that Christ, and nothing but Christ, is the ground of your hope of final acceptance, let it be manifest to all that you live under a deep impression that you are not your own. Let your deportment be a standing refutation of the charge that the doctrines of grace are not according to godliness. "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven."

## LECTURE VIII.

EXPERIMENTAL CHRISTIANITY CONTRASTED WITH  
FORMALISM, SENTIMENTALISM AND FANATICISM.

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1 PETER II. 3.

*If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.*

IN CONNEXION WITH

REVELATION III. 1.

*Thou hast a name that thou livest and art dead.*

The design of the Apostle in the commencement of the chapter in which the former of these passages occurs, was to suppress the risings of every unhallowed temper among the Christians whom he was addressing, and to encourage them to the cultivation of all those virtues and graces which are enjoined by the gospel. He takes for granted that they had already been regenerated; that they were no strangers to the consolations of piety; that they had "tasted that the Lord is gracious;" and in view of the experience which they had actually had, calls upon them, "as new born babes," to 'desire the sincere milk of the word that' they 'may grow thereby.'



The point to which I wish particularly to direct your attention is, that the great truth that "the Lord is gracious" had been a matter of *experience* with them; or, in the language of the Apostle, they had "tasted" it.—And what was true of them in respect to this particular truth, is true of all real Christians in respect to the entire gospel of which this truth indeed is an epitome: it is not merely a matter of speculation with them, but a matter of experience also.

The latter passage makes part of the reproof which the Apostle John received in vision to be communicated to the angel of the church in Sardis. This church, it seems, had greatly declined in spirituality, insomuch that it had but little of the life of godliness remaining. Hence the Apostle declares, "I know thy works that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead." As if he had said, "Ye are professedly a company of Christians, dead to the world and alive to God; but ye are really, for the most part, alive to the world and dead to God: though there may be some among you who have a principle of true piety, yet the religion of much the greater part is no better than the body without the spirit." And it had been well if the church of Sardis had been the only church to which this reproof could admit of application: but unhappily it describes the character of a large number of the professed followers of Christ in every age. They have a name that they live: they wear the Christian's badge, and often speak the Christian's language, and profess to be travelling toward the Christian's home; but, after all, they are dead: they have never felt the power of God's quickening grace, but are relying either on some false experience, or on something that is merely external, as evidence of their claim to the Christian character.

You perceive then that the topick which these two passages in their connexion fairly present, is *the contrast between Experimental Christianity and its counterfeits*: and these counterfeits may be reduced to three—viz, *Formalism*, *Sentimentalism* and *Fanaticism*.

By *Experimental Christianity*, I mean, in one word, Christianity in its inward and spiritual operations.

By *Formalism* I mean a scrupulous regard for the externals of religion at the expense of its life and power: By *Sentimentalism*, a habit of refined religious speculation combined with a delicate or sickly sensibility:—By *Fanaticism*, the workings of a wild and extravagant zeal in the prosecution of ends which are professedly or really connected with morality or religion.

When I speak of these three latter qualities as *counterfeits* of Experimental Christianity, you will not understand me to imply that they cannot *in any degree* co-exist with the genuine quality. No doubt there may be a degree of Formalism, or Sentimentalism, or Fanaticism, associated with true piety; and of the two latter particularly, a *great* degree: nevertheless they have nothing in common with it; and where either of them exists at all in such combination, it mars the Christian character. In the present discourse I shall consider them severally, as constituting the *basis* of the character; and of course, in this sense, as inconsistent with vital godliness.

Let us then contrast Experimental Christianity on the one hand, and Formalism, Sentimentalism and Fanaticism, on the other, in respect to

- I. Their ORIGIN:
- II. Their NATURE:
- III. Their EFFECTS.

## 1. Their ORIGIN.

1. Formalism, Sentimentalism and Fanaticism, originate *in the abuse of a divine influence, or in the operation of mere natural feeling*: Experimental Christianity has its origin *in the new creating power of the Holy Ghost*.

It is quite possible that the individual who is now a Formalist, may, in other days, have been no stranger to the awakening and convincing influences of the Holy Spirit: he may have felt, for a season, that his soul was in jeopardy, and that, unless he took refuge in the grace of the gospel, he must inevitably perish; but having meditated, and prayed, and wept, and made various ineffectual efforts to find relief,—ineffectual, because made in the exercise of a legal spirit,—and having grown weary or discouraged in this course, he resolves at length upon another; and instead of endeavouring to let go his own righteousness as a ground of hope, he practically determines to cling to it more closely than ever; and as God is not a hard master, he hopes for acceptance on the ground of his intended obedience. And thus begins his course as a Formalist. Or it may be that he advances still farther, and instead of avowedly desisting from the effort to enter in at the straight gate, apparently comes upon evangelical ground, and professes a delightful confidence in the Saviour, and a cordial approbation of his work; and makes a publick profession of his faith with a full conviction that he has “tasted that the Lord is gracious;” but ere long it becomes evident both to himself and to others, that his experience was only a dream; and he feels and manifests as much interest in the objects of sense, and as little in the objects of faith, as he did previous to the time when his sins were set in order before him. If he were not *in the church*, he would now

have no motive to *come* into it ; but he has done an act which places him among the professed followers of Christ ; and the pride of consistency stands in the way of openly renouncing his profession ; and he compromises between the claims of his conscience and of his character on the one hand, and the claims of his worldly and corrupt inclinations on the other, by remaining in the church, and observing her forms, and holding to her standards, while yet he feels not the motions of a principle of spiritual life ; and this compromise once made, he may be considered as having deliberately entered on a habit of Formalism. Or, as the case may be, the individual concerned may never have been the subject of any special awakening influence ;—he may have been educated in a religious atmosphere, and have had his attention early directed to the forms of religion, and have heard their importance frequently and earnestly inculcated ; and he may have come to ascribe an undue importance to these apart from the spirit of piety ; and finally he may, in a measure unconsciously, have taken up the observance of them as a substitute for piety ; and now he is in the church as thorough-going a Formalist as she embosoms. You may aim as heavy a blow at the life of godliness as you will, and he evinces no anxiety for the result ; but touch one of its forms, and he instantly takes the alarm, as if you were laying profane hands on the ark of God.

The religion of the Sentimentalist is commonly to be traced to a peculiarity of temperament. Indeed, as I have already intimated, it supposes the existence of a peculiar susceptibility to refined and delicate impressions ; though that susceptibility may possibly be rather an acquired than an original quality. But I imagine that in almost every case in which you find this character ex-



emplified, you will find it associated with a love of what is soft or tender or beautiful in nature; and it is in this department of the soul, if I may use such an expression, that the religion of the Sentimentalist has its origin.—There is a chord strung in our nature that vibrates to the power of musick or eloquence, of beauty or grandeur; and if you can get this chord to vibrate in connexion with any thing that belongs to religion, and at the same time exclude the operation of truly devout affections, you have just the character which I am attempting to describe.

The Fanatick may or may not have been the subject of the awakening operations of the Holy Spirit. If he *has* been, he was awakened and nothing more: instead of making an entire surrender of the soul to God, he practically held to his own righteousness, while he mistook the bright illusions of fancy for the workings of living faith. And now, having the impression thoroughly established that he has been born from above, while yet the pride of his heart, instead of being subdued, has only received a different direction, he straightway kindles with the desire of becoming a reformer; and with a rash and self confident zeal he addresses himself to his work. Or it may be that he has never been really convinced of sin; and that, having come within the influence of some whirlwind of excitement, he has taken up the determination to be religious, and by the aid of an ardent temperament has been enabled almost instantly to work himself into a conviction that he *is* so; and with no other training than this, he fancies himself prepared to go forth single-handed, and storm the most formidable of all the citadels of the great adversary. If his own opinion of himself is to be taken, he is not only a true Christian, but an eminent Christian: instead of being

born a babe in Christ, he imagines himself to have been born with nearly the stature of a perfect person ; while the melancholy fact is that he has not even had any adequate sense of his need of salvation.

But far different from this is the origin of Experimental Christianity. This originates in every case in the unresisted agency of the Holy Ghost. That divine agent not only enlightens the mind and quickens the conscience, but new-creates the heart. Of the manner in which He operates for the accomplishment of this work we know comparatively little ; but of the fact we have no more reason to doubt than we have that God has given us a revelation. "Except a man be born of the Spirit," saith the Saviour, 'he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.' And again, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord." The individual may indeed, even in repeated instances, have been the subject of an awakening influence, and may have resisted it, and deliberately put his conscience to sleep ; but he did not resist it at last ; he became willing in the day of God's power ; and had it not been for God's gracious interposition, he would have remained dead in trespasses and sins.

2. Formalism, Sentimentalism and Fanaticism, originate in a *speculative, partial, or distorted view of divine truth* : Experimental Christianity, in a *correct, full and practical view of it*.

The Formalist, as he may have been the subject of an awakening influence, may also have had, to some extent, practical views of divine truth ; but in becoming what he now is,—in professedly assuming the religious character while his whole reliance is upon religious forms, it is impossible that he should have viewed it other than with an eye of cold speculation ; for a practical view

would have involved the exercise of the affections, and at least have kept down a spirit of Formalism. And while his view of truth is merely speculative, it is also extremely imperfect: he contemplates chiefly those parts of it which refer to the regulation of the outward man, while those larger portions which have more immediate reference to the inner man of the heart are comparatively disregarded. He may readily enough admit in words every doctrine of the Bible, and possibly may stand ready for a vigorous defence of the entire system; nevertheless the view which he habitually takes of it in his own reflections is a partial view; and distorted, because it is partial; for inasmuch as the truths of God's word taken together constitute a harmonious system, it is manifest that they cannot be separated but that the proportion of the whole system will be destroyed.

Not less imperfect, at least in most cases, is the view of divine truth which is taken by the Sentimentalist.—There are indeed certain truths upon which he dwells with delight: for instance, the paternal character of God, the relation we sustain to him as creatures, and perhaps the mediation of Christ in some of its more general features, he may speak of in terms of deepest interest or most impressive eulogy. But even so far as these subjects are concerned, he is rather absorbed in beautiful speculation concerning them, than in those deeply practical views which they are intended to secure: and as for the more particular evangelical doctrines and precepts which are specially designed and adapted to promote the crucifixion of the body of sin, he turns from them with disgust, because he finds them better fitted to exercise his conscience than his taste or imagination. Indeed so independent is he of divine truth that, if the Bible were blotted out of existence, he might still retain

all his religion : he might find in the works of nature and in the general arrangements of Providence ample scope for lofty or beautiful speculation ; and those fine sensibilities in which he makes his religion chiefly to consist, might rise as high, and work as powerfully, as if the whole field of revelation were spread out before him.

And what is the view of divine truth in which Fana-ticism has its origin ? I may say in every case it is a one-sided and disproportionate view of it. Hence you see the Fanatick always professing to be deeply burdened with a sense of his obligations in respect to some very limited field of moral or religious duty : a single object is elevated far above its legitimate relative claims ; and upon this the whole energy of his nature is concentrated ; while other equally important objects are regarded as unworthy of a thought. Unless his zeal be a matter of mere caprice, in which case divine truth is not regarded at all, you cannot fail to perceive in the partial character which it assumes, evidence that it originated in a lamentably defective view of that "Scripture," "*all*" of which inspiration hath pronounced "profitable."

Experimental Christianity has no such spurious origin. It takes for granted that divine truth has been brought in contact with the mind, in its fulness, purity and power. I do not mean that the sinner in the act of being regenerated, or even that the Christian in any part of his earthly course, has a perfectly correct view of the entire system of God's truth ; but I mean that his *general* view of it is correct ; he contemplates the system in its grand and essential peculiarities ; and while he contemplates it, he opens his heart to its legitimate influences. As these views of evangelical truth are, to a great extent, co-existent with Experimental Christianity,



—nay as, in the order of nature, they actually precede it, so they are the views which Experimental Christianity is peculiarly adapted to cherish; and thus the intellect and the affections exert a reciprocal influence upon each other.

We pass to the next point in the contrast between Experimental Christianity and its counterfeits, viz,

## II. Their NATURE.

1. *The leading element in Formalism, Sentimentalism and Fanaticism, is self-righteousness: the leading element in Experimental Christianity is self-abasement.*

Look at the Formalist and contemplate the workings of a self-righteous spirit in *him*. Do not suppose that I intend to intimate that the forms of religion are unimportant, or that the use of them necessarily implies the existence of this unhallowed temper: so far from this, the forms of religion are ordained by the author of religion, and are adapted to its promotion, if they are not essential to its existence; and other things being equal, we have a right to expect the greatest amount of genuine piety where these forms are most faithfully observed.—Still they are capable of being perverted—they often actually *are* perverted, to foster a self-righteous spirit; and in the case which I am supposing, this is the predominating temper that prompts to the observance of them. What is it that makes the Formalist so regular in his attendance upon all external duties, or so zealous for the order of the church, or the purity of the faith? It is not surely because he views these things in their subserviency to his own sanctification or that of others; for neither a principle of holiness nor a love of holiness has ever been implanted in his heart; but it is because he secretly cherishes the feeling that in all this he is doing

something that will catch and please the eye of Heaven; and that he will find it set to his account in the book of God's remembrance at the last day. It is possible that he may be under the influence of this feeling when he does not acknowledge it even to himself; nay, while he is contending for a system of faith which utterly excludes the influence of works in the sinner's justification, and which, if it should have its legitimate operation, would cast out every self-righteous feeling from his bosom.

It may not be quite so obvious that a spirit of self-righteousness is the primary element in the religion of the Sentimentalist; and yet, if I mistake not, this will appear evident, upon a moment's reflection. Be it so that the Sentimentalist speculates beautifully, and feels exquisitely, and if you please weeps luxuriously, because this sort of indulgence brings with it present gratification; but if this constitutes his religion, he surely has a higher purpose to answer by it: he connects with it in some way or other the hope of Heaven; and inasmuch as it does not include faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, in what way can he suppose that it will subserve his immortal interests, but as a meritorious service recommending him to the divine regards? He, just as truly as the Formalist, substitutes his own doings in the place of Christ; and the spirit which animates both is the same.

And the Fanatick is not at all behind either the Formalist or the Sentimentalist in the exhibition of this odious quality. He may indeed profess to be very humble, and to have the deepest sense of his unworthiness before God; but in these very professions he shows himself under the dominion of the opposite spirit. He may talk much of his love to God and love to souls, of his earnest wrestlings in the closet and his self-denied efforts in the world, and he may, in all this, disclaim every idea

of personal merit, and yet even a superficial observer can perceive that he knows not what manner of spirit he is of. He may address himself to the pursuit of some favourite object with a burning zeal, and may set at naught every dictate not only of common sense, but of common decency, and may throw himself as a fire-brand upon society; and he may not suspect that he is influenced by any other than an honest desire to glorify God; and yet the real feeling that controuls him, is a desire to glorify himself. He may talk much of Christ, but he is not practically resting upon Christ. It is the merit,—I cannot say of his own good works,—but of his own wild and blustering movements, that his heart silently pleads before God, as the ground of his acceptance.

But the very basis of Experimental Christianity is a spirit of humility. Such is the gospel in its very constitution, that it is impossible it should take effect upon the heart without striking an effectual blow at human pride. For in the first place it contemplates man in a state of absolute ruin; and then the salvation which it offers him is a matter of sovereign grace; and the manner in which it is procured leaves him with nothing of which to glory. Accordingly you will always find that, where the gospel has exerted its power upon the heart, its first effect has been to bring the sinner down as a suppliant in the dust. In the spirit of deep contrition, he breathes forth the prayer, “God be merciful to me a sinner!” His own righteousness is abandoned as utterly worthless; and he lays hold of the righteousness of Christ as his only hope. And as Experimental Christianity has its beginning in self-abasement; so also it has its progress; and the subject of it becomes more humble in proportion as the gospel exerts its power, to the end of his course.

2. Formalism, Sentimentalism and Fanaticism, *lay under contribution only a part of the man*: Experimental Christianity, *the whole man*.

Formalism claims to direct the operations of the understanding, and the motions of the body, and the language of the lips: but with the province of the affections it does not materially interfere. The individual who comes under its influence may possibly be a thorough student of the Bible, and may be familiarly acquainted not only with the evidences of Christianity, but with its doctrines: at any rate, he either intelligently or blindly avows his attachment to the formularies of that branch of the church with which he is connected. And while he professes to hold fast the form of sound words, he is regular in his attendance upon all the instituted means of grace, and nothing but imperious necessity ever prevents his seat at the communion table, in the sanctuary, and perhaps in the lecture room, from being filled. He may also be exemplary in his performance of the various moral duties of life; and may not only abstain from all acts of injustice toward his fellow-men, but may perform many charitable deeds, and may stand forth the active patron of many good institutions. Nay, he may even go through the form of family prayer and secret prayer;—in short, he may do every external act which a true Christian would do, and may so closely resemble a true Christian in his deportment, as to render it impossible for any but the all penetrating eye to distinguish between them. But after all, there has been no quickening influence imparted to the affections. The truths of the gospel have been received into the mind merely as the materials for a barren speculation; the lips have uttered forth their persuasion of these truths, either in obedience to the general dictates of conscience



or from the mere calculations of self-interest; and the hands, and the feet, and the whole body, though they have moved by rule, have never moved under the influence of devout affections. Formalism, however it may provide for other parts of our nature, yields up the heart to the coldness and barrenness of a perpetual winter.

Sentimentalism furnishes in its own way some scope for the intellect and the affections; but it takes no cognizance of the external conduct; and provides no security for its right direction. One important part of this kind of religion is to speculate as ingeniously as may be, chiefly either in the regions of absolute error, or else on the farthest verge of the territories of truth; and this certainly is an exercise for the intellect. Another, and the only remaining part of it, is to have awakened in the bosom a glow of refined feeling,—particularly the sentiment of delicacy, or admiration, or sickly tenderness; and this, you perceive, involves, in some sense, the exercise of the affections. But inasmuch as the doctrines which occupy the mind are usually of an exceedingly abstract, and sometimes an equivocal, character, and as the feelings which are awakened by its contemplations are just what such doctrines are adapted to produce, it is manifest that there is no provision here for any influence that shall suitably controul the life. I do not say that the Sentimentalist is of course an immoral man, or that he may not perform many externally good deeds in obedience to the impulse of a naturally generous spirit;—I only say that there is nothing in his *religion* to ensure such a result.

The Fanatick, you might suppose at first view, had every faculty both of soul and body in vigorous exercise; but you could not remain in such a mistake after a little observation. His will and passions are indeed ordinari-

ly kept under heavy contribution. His bodily powers are not likely to get more than their legitimate share of rest ; for as he moves in a whirlwind, so he is almost always moving. But for the reasoning faculty he has ordinarily little use ; and as for the judgment, he gives that a universal dispensation ; for he could not suffer it to do its office, but at the hazard of finding himself a sober man. To say nothing of the fact that none of his faculties, so far as religion is concerned, are moved in obedience to a proper impulse,—a part of his nature, and no unimportant part, is suffered to remain entirely at rest.

But Experimental Christianity stands forth in delightful contrast to all these, inasmuch as she secures the operation, and the legitimate operation, of all our various faculties ; so far I mean as their exercise is dependant on the moral feelings. The existence of a principle of piety in the heart, takes for granted on the one hand, that the intellect has already been brought into exercise in the contemplation and application of God's truth, and that the moral powers have been quickened and directed by its influence, while it furnishes a pledge on the other that the mind shall continue to act, and the heart shall continue to feel, and the body shall continue to move, in subserviency to God's requirements. It is the ordinance of God that the principle of vital godliness in the soul should be sustained and cherished, under a divine agency, by means of the influence of truth let in through the medium of the understanding, and that this principle should develope itself in a course of well directed and benevolent action. I do not say indeed that Experimental Christianity secures in the present life the uniformly right exercise of all our faculties ; for that were consistent only with a state of absolute perfection ; but

I mean that she contemplates this, and makes provision for it, and if her influence were in no degree counteracted, would actually accomplish it.

3. Formalism, Sentimentalism and Fanaticism, *are dependant for their existence on circumstances: Experimental Christianity will live in any circumstances.*

As the Formalist is at home only in the region of forms, if you separate him from them, the language of his heart is, "Ye have taken away my gods, and what have I more?" So long as his lot is cast amidst the ordinances of the church, he finds it an easy matter to keep up the externals of religion by a constant attendance upon them; and in going through with a regular routine of outward duties his religion chiefly consists. But suppose, in the Providence of God, he is separated from his accustomed religious privileges, and is thrown into circumstances in which there are no Christian ordinances, no ministry of the gospel, no visible church, nothing upon which the spirit of mere Formalism can subsist,—is it not manifest that the Formalist necessarily, to a great extent, gives up his religion? So far as his religion was a mere matter of *attendance* upon publick forms, of course he gives it up altogether; and so far as it was a matter of *attachment* to such forms, he probably gives it up gradually and imperceptibly; for while he knows nothing of the *real* value of these forms, as they are subservient to vital godliness, and recognises a necessity of yielding to the circumstances in which he is placed, it is easy to see that there will be much to diminish, and little to sustain, the interest he has formerly had in them. And when he yields up his Formalism, you cannot calculate what will come in its place: it may

be, for it often has been, gross immorality or downright skepticism.

The religion of the Sentimentalist, too, will be found both to live and die under the influence of mere circumstances. Let an individual of this character have the leisure to read abundantly his favourite authors, and, if you please, the opportunity to listen frequently to some favourite preacher, and let him mingle much in the society of those who are never at home but in the region of airy speculations or delicate susceptibilities, and his Sentimentalism will give a complexion to his whole character, and discover itself in almost every conversation. But let him be removed from this congenial atmosphere, and brought within the range of different influences; let him be immersed in the occupations of the world, and obliged to take an active share in the every-day realities of life, and let him hear nothing and read nothing in his favourite strain, and it is probable that, at no distant period, his ruling religious passion will be changed, and his Sentimentalism may pass away almost as a dream of the night. In many cases, however, this kind of religion is so essentially engrafted upon the original temperament, that there are scarcely any external circumstances in which it will not endure; and the very fact that the temperament is so frequently and so intimately connected with it, is itself an illustration of my position that it is dependant even for its existence on circumstances.

And the same general remark applies with at least equal force to the Fanatick. At one time you see him well nigh frantick with zeal in some particular enterprise; and the highest efforts that he can make for the accomplishment of his object do not satisfy him;—but lo! while the object has lost none of its importance, and



he none of his ability to aid it, some slight change of circumstances has withdrawn his attention from it altogether; and he is now perhaps quite indifferent whether or not it ever be accomplished. He slumbers for a little, and then awakes with another tempest in his soul, which perhaps carries him in an opposite direction; and when that has expended its fury, it dies away, and another and another succeeds, according to the circumstances in which he happens to be placed. Indeed he is altogether at the mercy of circumstances. When his fanatical spirit shall awake, and how long it shall continue, it is impossible even for himself to decide; though, inasmuch as the mind, from its very constitution, sooner or later resists an uninterrupted exciting influence, it is certain that this spirit will not, cannot, be kept in perpetual operation. Even the Fanatick may become so dull as to require to be stirred up on the very subject to which he has once been enthusiastically devoted; and more than that, his indifference may become so inveterate that your exhortations and admonitions will be like words wasted upon the wind.

I do not say that Experimental Christianity is, in all respects, independent of circumstances; but certainly it will live, and may even flourish, in any circumstances. There is no natural temperament, however cold and severe, however ardent and wild, however careless and fickle, that can oppose an effectual obstacle against it; however much it may be *modified* by any of these qualities. And so too let the external circumstances into which the individual is thrown be ever so adverse, a principle of true piety once implanted in the heart, will never be eradicated. What though he may be cut off from the enjoyment of all the publick means of grace, and removed from the influence of all Christian society,

and encompassed about with the most formidable temptations—it is not certain indeed that his Christian graces will reach the same vigorous maturity which they might have reached, under other circumstances—it is not certain but that, for a season, they may even languish so that the evidences of his religious character shall become dubious and unsatisfactory; but it is as certain as God's word can make it, that that inward principle will still live, and will sooner or later develop itself in such a manner as to put to flight every doubt in respect to its reality. Yes, let Experimental Christianity once gain a lodgement in the soul, and not all that men on earth or fiends in hell can do, can ever dislodge it. It is a principle as imperishable as man's own existence. "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

It remains to contrast Experimental Christianity and its counterfeits in respect to

### III. Their EFFECTS.

1. Formalism, Sentimentalism and Fanaticism, *furnish no pledge*, Experimental Christianity *furnishes a certain pledge, of a useful life.*

The Formalist may indeed, in some respects, subserve the interests of his fellow-men: he may be, from the same principle that makes him a Formalist,—that is, a principle of self-righteousness,—the active patron of many objects with which the welfare of society is intimately connected; and even his strict observance of the forms of religion may exert a general influence in favour of morality and good order. But after all, when you take into view the *entire* influence of his character, you will, I think, find great reason to doubt whether it is not less for good than for evil. Admit that he performs many

actions that are externally good, yet the spirit which prompts to them ordinarily comes out even to the eye of a superficial observer ; and as that is nothing better than a self-righteous spirit, it cannot fail to detract greatly from the interest with which they are regarded, as well as from the influence which in themselves they are fitted to exert. And what effect must the general example of the Formalist produce both upon the church and the world ? So far as his influence extends in the church, it must bring over it little short of a death chill ; it must not only wound the feelings but embarrass the efforts, if not discourage the zeal, of those who have a living principle of religion, and who would fain move forward for the advancement of Christ's cause in the spirit of fraternal co-operation. If there are those who are ready to halt in the religious life, whose faith and fervour and general spirituality are beginning to decline, surely they will look at the Formalist and will triumph in a comparison of the languor of their affections with the absolute deadness of his ; and with his example to minister to their comfort, you cannot calculate to what lengths they may wander. Nor is his influence upon the world less to be deprecated than upon the church. Not only can you expect from him no direct efforts for the conversion of men, but his whole character is adapted to make the impression that religion is chiefly an external matter, and that salvation may be obtained independently of a spiritual renovation. Nay, the tendency of his conduct is to counteract the efforts of true Christians to bring sinners to repentance ; for how natural is it, when they are pressed with their obligations to repent and turn to the Lord, that they should endeavour to persuade themselves that the sacrifice to which they are urged is unnecessary, and that a moral life including an external at-

tendance on the means of religion, is all that is required: and this is precisely the impression which the example of the Formalist is fitted to make. Instead of being a fellow-helper with the true Christian, in his efforts to arouse and convince and save the slumbering sinner, he is actually a fellow-worker with the sinner in enabling him to resist the faithful efforts of the true Christian, and in putting his conscience to sleep upon the pillow of self-righteousness. If the Formalist accomplishes any good, whether in the church or out of it, it is, for the most part, a mere accidental matter for which his religion does not provide; while the evil which he accomplishes is the legitimate fruit of the religion which he adopts.

And I am at loss where to look for the elements of an active and useful life in the religion of the Sentimentalist. That in which *his* religion especially consists, as we have already seen, is being employed in beautiful speculation, or giving play to a refined and perhaps artificial sensibility. But tell me how either the church or the world are to be benefitted by this? It is designed to be, and actually is, nothing else than a more decent kind of self-indulgence; and to suppose that it could have any reforming or beneficial influence upon mankind were not less absurd than to attribute such an influence to the interest with which one individual contemplates a mathematical proposition, or to the delight with which another listens to sweet strains of music.

I do not deny that the Fanatick may be, to a certain extent, useful; and sometimes a tempest of Fanaticism, in which all the moral elements have seemed to be wildly rushing together, has passed off, leaving us a purer atmosphere to breathe, and a more glorious sky



to gaze upon. Fanaticism may operate indirectly for good, by rebuking a listless spirit; by directing publick attention toward objects of real importance which may have been unreasonably neglected; and by the effort which it calls forth from consistent and sober Christians to withstand its withering influences. But after having made every possible concession in its favour, I am still prepared to say that its natural tendencies are pre-eminently adverse to the best interests of man. What has Fanaticism done in other ages and in other countries? Read the history of the church, and it will tell you of the instruments of torture which it has devised, of the altars stained with human blood over which it has presided, of the millions of victims which it is able to reckon up, and of the wide spread desolation and indescribable horror for which it is fully responsible. And may I not ask what has Fanaticism done, or rather what has it not done, in our own beloved land? Has it not been a leaven of evil in the best and holiest operations in which the church has been engaged? Has it not borne away, as on the wings of a tempest, many of the goodly ornaments, if not the substantial supports, of the temple of evangelical truth and order? Has it not palsied the hands and crippled the efforts of many who count it a privilege to live and to labour for Christ? Has it not opened the floodgates of crimination, and filled society with wrath and strife, and made men act as if they believed that the grand object of human existence were the tithing of mint, annise and cummin? I say again, Fanaticism, I verily believe, is responsible, to a great extent, for all these evils; and one principal reason why the plants in this garden of the Lord, (I refer to our American Zion,) are not at this hour blooming more luxuriantly and sending forth a richer fragrance,

is, that Fanaticism, as an emissary from below, has broken into this sacred enclosure, and diffused far and wide a baleful and withering influence.

I turn with delight to Experimental Christianity, for I find in her all the elements of an active and enduring usefulness. He whose character has been cast in the mould of gospel truth, has no desire so strong as to do good to his fellow-men and to glorify God; and herein lies the proof that his faculties have received a right direction. In all his benevolent efforts he is guided, not by an accidental influence which may pass away to-morrow, and leave him either to do nothing or to harm the cause which he has been labouring to promote, but by a fixed principle of action which is incorporated among the elements of his renewed nature; and herein lies the pledge that his zeal will be enduring. He may not be rich, and therefore his gifts may not be large; and possibly he may be so poor that he has literally nothing to bestow; but then he has a heart that would *dispose* him to give, if it were in his power; and a benevolent disposition in such a case, while it is not without its reward as it respects himself, is not without its effect as it respects others. He may occupy an obscure station in society, and hence the sphere of his direct influence may be limited; but in that limited sphere he labours both for God and man with diligence and fidelity. Possibly he may be shut up through the influence of bodily infirmity or disease in his own dwelling, and may be cut off from all intercourse with the world; but even there he is doing good; for the few who may come to his bedside he blesses by the meekness and heavenliness of his spirit; and if none actually come, it is a blessing to the neighbourhood,—it is a blessing to the world, that they have his intercessions at the throne of

mercy. When were those who have died martyrs to our holy faith really accomplishing most for the noblest and the best of causes? Was it, think you, while they were busy in direct efforts to sustain and advance that cause? Or was it not rather while they were exhibiting the meekness and gentleness of Christ, after having fallen into the hands of their enemies and murderers? Especially was it not, when nothing remained for them but to bow their heads and expire amidst the horrors and triumphs of martyrdom? The activity of a whole life was nothing to the cause of Christ, compared with the half-hour's torture, or even the momentary pang, which caused their names to be enrolled on the list of martyrs to the truth.

2. Formalism, Sentimentalism and Fanaticism, *yield no true spiritual peace*: Experimental Christianity *yields a peace that passeth understanding*.

There are two things necessary to constitute true peace of mind, neither of which is secured by the counterfeits of Experimental Christianity. The one is a sense of reconciliation with God; the other, a calm and well balanced state of the affections. In respect to the first of these—viz, a sense of reconciliation, the individuals concerned may indeed and do imagine that their sins are forgiven, and that they have become the objects of the divine complacency: but then this is merely a delusion; and it is impossible that it should yield the same substantial and abiding peace as would result from the reality. And then in regard to the state of the affections—how manifest is it that there is nothing in either of these counterfeits that is adapted effectually to tranquilize them amidst the various storms of human life! What is there to keep the bosom of the Formalist from becoming like the troubled sea, when his religion leaves

him with his native propensities to evil unsubdued?—What is there in the religion of the Sentimentalist to harmonize the various principles of *his* nature, when his religion is nothing more than a species of self-indulgence? And as for the Fanatick, he never breathes freely but in the tempest; and as he produces disquietude in others, so there is no tranquillity in his own bosom. No, I repeat, none of these counterfeits make any adequate provision for inward peace; and the reason is that they leave the conscience with its inward stings, and the heart with its unsanctified affections.

Experimental Christianity diffuses through the soul a peace which the world knoweth not of. True indeed this peace is neither perfect nor uninterrupted; for that would consist only with a state of perfect sanctification; but it is a sweet spiritual peace, which it is the province of the Comforter alone to impart. He who is the subject of it looks up to God as a reconciled Father in Christ; and while faith recognises him in this endearing relation, his heart is filled with the spirit of adoption. And as he has been transformed by the power of divine grace into the image of Christ, as well as had his conscience sprinkled with the blood of Christ, there is now a delightful harmony among the different passions and affections of his soul; so that while “Abba Father” is upon his lips, his heart is like the pure still waters which reflect bright images from the heavens above them.—Look at the true Christian when he is lashed by the tempest of trouble; look at him when he is surrounded by the night clouds of death; and say whether that which you witness can be any thing short of the peace of God.

3. Neither Formalism, Sentimentalism, nor Fanaticism, *can exert any influence in our favour beyond the*



*present life: Experimental Christianity secures the interests of the life that is to come.*

I beg leave here to repeat a remark which I had occasion to make in the commencement of the discourse—viz, that it is not every degree of these several counterfeits that is inconsistent with true piety: it is only where either of them constitutes the basis of the religious character that it can fairly be put in contrast with Experimental Christianity. It is but an extension of this remark to say that these qualities may exist in a subordinate and modified sense, in consistency with the requisite qualifications for Heaven; but when either of them gains the ascendancy over all other qualities, and becomes the leading element in the religious character, nothing is more certain than that it cuts off from all scriptural hope of eternal life. The reason is that it does not involve a sanctified temper; and of course, as justification and sanctification are inseparable, it does not involve that title to Heaven which is secured by living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The Formalist may be ever so scrupulous in the ordering of his external deportment; the Sentimentalist may be ever so warm in his expressions of admiration for the works or ways of God; the Fanatick may be ever so confident that his heart is full of the love of Christ, and that his career is one of unmingled benevolence; and yet, after all, not one of them has a principle of living faith; not one of them acts from a supreme regard to God's authority; of course not one of them has any thing better than the hope of the hypocrite. Let the Formalist, the Sentimentalist and the Fanatick, severally know, that all the good which their religion secures to them they are experiencing now; and that they are treasuring up nothing but tribulation and anguish for the future.

But the blessings which Experimental Christianity secures, have only begun to be experienced, when death puts a period to the earthly career. Having been the soul's comforter and guide amidst these scenes of darkness and tempest, she enters with it to a region of unclouded and perpetual day. I see the Christian lingering on the farthest verge of life, with triumph in his eye, with triumph upon his lips ; and the next moment his voice returns to me through the valley of death in a note of immortal praise, which tells me that the everlasting gates have been lifted up, and he has caught his first view of the glories of his eternal home. And now, with the Bible spread out before you, you may analyze his joy. You may think of the palm in his hand and the crown upon his head ; of the presence of the Redeemer and the society of the ransomed ; of the intellect growing brighter, and the heart becoming purer, and the whole soul approximating towards infinite perfection ; and you may crown your highest conceptions of bliss with the idea of eternity ; and after all your view has included nothing but what is secured by Experimental Christianity : while Formalism, Sentimentalism and Fanaticism, each leaves the soul at the end of the dark valley, to plunge into an abyss of horrors, Experimental Christianity throws open the portals of the world above, and bids the spirit enter, and travel onward from glory to glory, while immortality endures.

1. In the review of our subject we may see, first, *how insidious and diversified are the wiles of the adversary to destroy the souls of men.*

He leads multitudes to perdition in the way of mere carelessness ; and multitudes more in the way of open opposition to all religion ; and yet another class by

some miserable perversion of the Christian system, either demolishing the foundation or overturning the superstructure ; but there are still others, and by no means a small number, who are fatally deceived by some one or other of the counterfeits of Experimental Christianity. He flatters the Formalist that there is that in his attention to forms and his attachment to creeds, that he may safely plead as the ground of his acceptance at the last day. He flatters the Sentimentalist that his refined speculations, and tender feelings and beautiful tears, evince all the preparation that is necessary for an admission to the glories of the eternal temple. He flatters the Fanatick that the wild fire of his spirit is of the same nature with the zeal of seraphs ; and that, in the efforts he is making to benefit man and glorify God, he has the pledge of an open and abundant entrance into Heaven. But in all this he is doing the work of an arch-deceiver. He has his own purpose ; and that purpose is to drown the soul in destruction and perdition. Have you been accustomed to think of the world of wo as peopled only by the profane, and the profligate, and the despisers of God's truth ? If so, you have been deceived ; for the Formalist who had always walked upon a line will be there ; the Sentimentalist who had uttered a thousand beautiful thoughts respecting religion will be there ; the Fanatick who had gloried in being the chief among the saints will be there ; each, with his mistake corrected, and the tremendous fact burning upon his spirit that he is to sin and suffer forever.

2. Our subject teaches us *how important it is that we maintain a rigid and constant self-scrutiny.*

If you had some worldly end to accomplish in which you were most deeply interested, and yet were aware

that there were many ways in which you were liable to fail of accomplishing it, you would of course use the utmost vigilance and caution, that your efforts, if possible, might be directed in such a manner as to secure the desired result. And why should you not practise the same kind of wisdom in respect to an object of infinitely higher importance—the salvation of your soul? You are liable to fail of that, when you imagine that you are in the way of securing it: nay, you may be very confident that you have made your calling and your election sure, while yet you have not so much as taken the first step towards becoming a true disciple. Do you say that there can be no danger in your case, when you are so exemplary in your attendance on all the means of grace, and in the discharge of your various relative duties? I answer, if you are that and nothing more, you bear the Formalist's character, and must expect the Formalist's doom. Do you dwell with delight upon the admiration you sometimes feel and express for the works of nature and the beauties of religion, as if herein were evidence that your spirit has received a heavenly impress? Take heed lest the future should prove that this is mere Sentimentalism which, when weighed in the balance, will be found wanting. Are you full of zeal for the honour of God and the salvation of men; and do you profess yourself ready not only to stand forth as a reformer, but even to die as a martyr, in the cause of truth and righteousness? Believe me, this may be nothing more than the workings of a phrenzied fanaticism;—a flame that has been kindled not by the breath of God's Holy Spirit, but by a spark from the region below. Remember that, as the adversary who is plotting for your ruin sometimes takes the form of an angel of



light, so the counterfeits of Experimental Christianity are sometimes so perfect, that nothing but the most close and diligent scrutiny will enable you to detect them.— Wherefore let there be much of self-examination in the economy of your religious life. Accustom yourselves to accurate discrimination between true and false experience. Let the conviction that you have felt the power of divine grace be the result, not of superficial inquiry into the state of your hearts, but of deep and patient examination. And let the devout petition of the Psalmist often be upon your lips, “Search me, O God, and know my heart, try me and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!”

Finally: Our subject teaches us *with what all-absorbing interest we should regard Experimental Christianity.*

In the series of discourses to the conclusion of which we are now brought, I have endeavoured not only to vindicate Christianity against the cavils of unbelievers, but to bring out its leading truths before you in the beautiful consistency in which we find them in the Bible. And I do not believe that any of you, as I have passed along, have felt that I was attributing an undue importance to these truths, or that I was too anxious to preserve you from the various forms of error. But I must not omit now to say that all that has preceded has been subordinate to this one great matter of Experimental Christianity; and that, considered apart from this, it can never answer the great purpose of man’s salvation. You may have a thorough knowledge not only of the evidences of the Christian Religion but of its doctrines; and you may be able to triumph in any conflict with infidelity or

heresy to which you can be called ; and yet, if you are strangers to the power of godliness, you will not be the better for your theology in the last day. The great question is not, whether you have speculatively believed the truth, or even been valiant for the truth, but whether it has left its impress upon your heart ; and if this cannot be answered in the affirmative, you have no pledge but that the extent of your knowledge and the orthodoxy of your creed may finally increase the horrors of your doom. You may have Christianity in every form that does not reach the heart, and yet you may be hastening forward to the doom of a reprobate : it is Experimental Christianity alone that strikes your name off from the catalogue of candidates for hell, and transfers it to a place in the Lamb's book of life.

Is Experimental Christianity then the one thing needful ? Is it the one thing needful to the perishing sinner, of whom inspiration hath said that he "*must* be born again," or never "enter into the kingdom of God?" Is it the one thing needful to the prosperity of Zion,—to the strengthening of her stakes, and the lengthening of her cords, and the beauty of her appearance ? Is it the one thing needful to the joy of angels, when they descend from their native Heavens to witness what is passing among the dwellers on the earth ? Is it the one thing needful to the ultimate triumph of the Redeemer's mediation ; to the preparation for that jubilee which shall be kept when the ransomed are all gathered home ? Then let the church fall upon her knees, and unitedly supplicate a revival of Experimental Christianity.—While she clings to the truth with undiminished pertinacity, and labours to the extent of her power to promote sound doctrine, let her regard all this as subsidiary

to the interests of vital godliness. Let her renew her zeal to send the gospel abroad to earth's remotest bounds; but with every effort in this hallowed cause let her connect a prayer that the power of the gospel may spread with its light, till the last moral desert on earth shall disappear, and the angels shall again take up the song of "Glory to God in the highest," because Christianity, daughter of the skies, has done her perfect work !











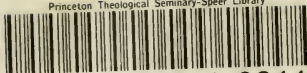








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